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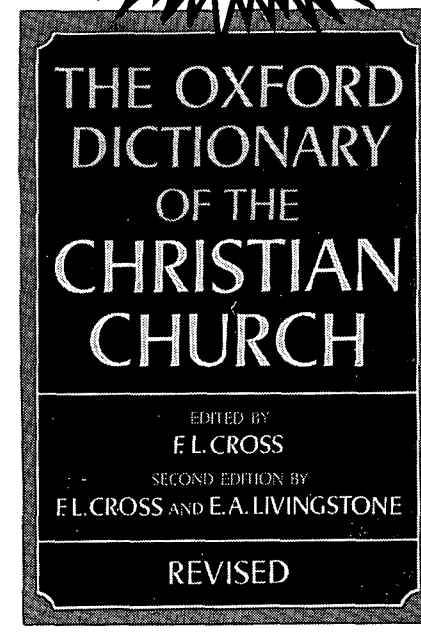

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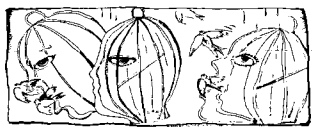
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

"I often think it's comical
That every boy and every gal
That's born into the world alive
Is either a little Liberal
Or else a little Conservative."
—W.S. Gilbert

PERSPECTIVE



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EDITOR
Thomas Fleming

MANAGING EDITOR
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SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
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ART DIRECTOR
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CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
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COMPOSITION MANAGER
Anita Fedora

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Rochelle Frank

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Vol. 15, No. 5 May 1991

On 'Illegal Immigration'

Thank you for Theodore Pappas's article (Cultural Revolutions) on illegal immigration in the January 1991 issue. So little is written about the topic that we are grateful when anyone recognizes the problems.

A little clarification. There are two kinds of deportation. Most frequent is what agents refer to as "VRs." This translates into "voluntary returns," meaning those who are picked up almost as soon as they cross the border and who return south without going through the lengthy and expensive process of formal deportation. In the San Diego sector alone, there were 473,373 arrested, most being VRs, in fiscal 1990. Were all those people to be put through the entire process, roughly 1,300 illegal aliens would be jailed every day.

Then there are the illegals arrested who have committed crimes other than breaking the federal law to enter. Drug dealers, burglars, rapists, killers—the whole gamut of penal code violations. These are the ones who should be held in custody, but the regulations for handling them are so complex—they have been deemed eligible for all the protections that citizens have—that they are usually released pending trial. Needless to say, most of them disappear.

As an organization, we are having a feud with Jack Kemp and his policy of allowing illegal aliens any benefits that citizens are eligible for. We wrote and asked him why he was allowing illegals to benefit from subsidized housing and other entitlements, and received a canned, non-pertinent answer, so wrote again. This time we received the following from his office:

"Secretary Kemp has expressed particular concern about the injustices that would inevitably result from governmental action designed to withhold funds from illegal aliens facing a critical need for community development block grant (CDBG) assistance. In this regard, it is his view that basic considerations of justice and decency, and special sensitivity to the need to protect the least among us from misfortune not of their choosing, justifies the Department's position."

You have a good grasp of what our smaller communities are going through with not only illegal aliens, but the amnestied. We find that a huge percentage of the amnestied probably used fraud to get their papers, and they too live in the open and hang around street corners looking for work, driving everyone bananas.

—Barbara McCarthy
Stamp Out Crime Council
San Diego, CA

That was some ball of yarn on West Coast immigration woes in your January issue. Let me pull at a few threads.

First you castigate the liberalization Congress enacted last fall, although it was basically designed to let in more people of a kindred cultural cast. Does its other provisions cloud the issue for you, or do you object broadly to the foreign-born? You worry about the medical costs of unbridled immigration in a social-welfare state. Rightly so. But why don't you address the welfare state itself instead of chasing off those who, like many of us, would exploit it? And, if it's sponging off America that so characterizes the immigrants, why is it, in Costa Mesa, California, and other cities you cite, that the most visible and targeted manifestations of the influx are the day laborers who congregate on residential sidewalks waiting for pick-up?

Then, you raise the specter of latter-day Okies fleeing to the great Anglo northland. It is true that California in recent years has shown a net exodus to both Oregon and Nevada, where Latinos are fewer and living costs less. It is not true for Washington State or Idaho or Montana or even Utah, however, so your reference to the Pacific Northwest is overdrawn.

Aside from these details, something larger needs to be said about the schism between libertarians and traditionalists on this issue. Mass immigration brings considerable difficulties, and objection to it is not *ipso facto* nativism or racism, and it cheapens the debate to suggest

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so. But in addition to being an economic flush whose value you consistently underappreciate, this tidal flow reflects a force of human spirit so powerful that bedrock conservatives, of all people, ought to be daunted by the prospect of outrightly resisting it.

—*Tim W. Ferguson*
Hermosa Beach, CA

On 'History'

Forrest McDonald's "On the Study of History" (February 1991) was stimulating. His quick survey of our nation's ills was pinpoint bombing. I had trouble, however, digesting McDonald's "the reason we cannot solve our social problems is precisely the reason we *can* put a man on the moon," and his allegation that the scientific method "cannot take a broad view." Right on the heels of these charges, McDonald declares that "the trouble with pragmatism is that it no longer works" and recommends that "before it is too late" we "cultivate instead a holistic view."

The social, political, and environmental problems we face today appear insurmountable, but pragmatic minds are at this moment using reason to get to the nub of these problems and to generate solutions. If an approach is found to be too "narrow," the true man of science will "broaden" his scope. This is elementary.

McDonald's examples of our ability to escape the clutches of scientific thinking—when we select appropriate gifts for loved ones or when we supply "proper" answers to a college professor—are, in fact, examples of rudimentary rational thinking. Simple logic helps us decide what kind of gift would please a friend, and simple logic enables us to determine a professor's bias, link good grades with parroting the "right" answers, and to thereby hoodwink the professor. It is illogical to assume, as McDonald does, that in these instances we perceive "with perceptual apparatuses not our own" and act "in accordance with the dictates of alien perceptual machinery."

The storm flag should be hoisted whenever suggestions are made to dispense with reason. Reason is the one common language whereby all the diverse peoples of the world can carry on a meaningful dialogue. It can be demonstrated in Timbuktu as well as in Peoria that it's not in man's best interest to defecate upstream from where he drinks. Once we depart from the scientific method, all hope for harmony vanishes.

—*Gene Owen*
Hatfield, AR

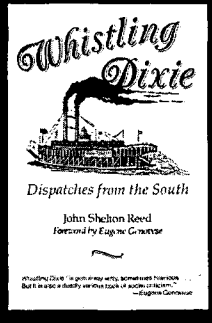
On 'New York vs. New York'

Regarding Bill Kauffman's "New York vs. New York," in your January issue: GIANTS BEAT THE BILLS! GIANTS BEAT THE BILLS! NYAH-NYAH! NYAH-NYAH! GIANTS BEAT THE BILLS!

—A. Nooyawka
Durham, NC

The Editors Reply:

Mr. Nooyawka has a point: we should all tip our hats to the New Jersey Giants.



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AS THE SHOCK OF American cluster bombs and the distinctive rumble of Abrams tanks fade from the Arabian nights, we world-citizens must begin to sort through the events of the last eight months. Many lessons could be drawn. Allow me to suggest two.

First, it seemed clear by the sixth week of open combat that American conservatives had succeeded in one task beyond their wildest dreams: in matters of foreign policy and war, the American press had been cowed. Recurring complaints notwithstanding, twenty years of relentless attacks on liberal bias in the media, by figures ranging from Spiro Agnew to Reed Irvine, have had their effect. With the exception of several writers for the *New York Times* and the consistent voice of Dan Rather, reporters in the Gulf have commonly behaved as dutiful patriots. In contrast to the Vietnam years, where correspondents questioned every official announcement, the Allied Command's principal problem was to restrain press enthusiasm for the campaign. Tight military censorship provoked surprisingly little concrete protest. Back home, regional newspapers and local broadcast outlets helped to marshal the war euphoria. Not since the mid-1940's had the "adversary press" been so pliant a tool of the foreign policy establishment, in service to the executive branch of government.

Second, George Bush deserves our awe for pulling off a constitutional coup, almost without remark. In the heated debate of November-January, some constitutional scholars insisted that Mr. Bush needed a congressional declaration of war before he could commit troops to battle in the Fertile Crescent. Other scholars, along with administration figures, argued that his powers as Commander in Chief gave him all the authority he needed, noting that of the 250 distinct American military actions of the past, only five had involved a declaration. All students of the Constitution, though, agreed that Congress exercised an important check on presidential war-making through its power of the purse: Chief Executives must still come to the Hill in order to pay for their wars.

Congress avoided an open display of its impotence by narrowly authorizing the Gulf campaign. Forgotten in the histrionics of the congressional debate, though, was Mr. Bush's true innovation: a way to pay for a foreign war without resort to Congress. Call it "contributions" or "burden sharing," the payment of tens of billions by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Japan, and others into the federal treasury gave Mssrs. Baker and Bush an unprecedented free hand.

Some critics of the war have blasted these payments as mercenary fees. The pundits miss the real splendor of the deed. A better way to view the money is as a tribute, in the medieval sense of a payment by vassals to their overlord and protector. Another way to see the donated cash is as a clever recycling of those ubiquitous petrodollars by the waxing branch of world government, "the international banking community."

Either way, Mr. Bush found a way to break free of the last enfeebled constitutional shackle on the President's war-making ability, and has enjoyed a power only dreamed of by Wilson and the Roosevelts. Like the Roman Senate in the old Empire, our Congress is still allowed to pretend it has a role, and it has obediently blessed the nation's first "off budget" war. This is, after all, simply good politics in the kinder, gentler Empire we inhabit.

—*Allan Carlson*

THE NEW WORLD ORDER promised by George Bush is turning out to be something like a unisex barbershop that can buzz off a woman's locks while giving male customers a wave and a perm. Over and over we have heard the phrase "our men and women stationed in the Gulf." As the war went on, we even learned that women were piloting combat helicopters (as they did, apparently, in Panama); in fact one woman pilot was killed. We were also informed that a woman had been taken as a prisoner of war. Eventually, reporters began to speak of "men and women in combat." The use of women in combat is, as we all know, forbidden by law, but this law is quickly assuming the status of Boston's statute against frequent bathing—more honored in the breach than in the observance.

Women in combat ought to be a source of unease among old-fashioned Americans who until recently believed it was a man's duty to protect the women of his family and nation. One prominent conservative recently told me that he was glad that he opposed the war, because he could not live with the thought that he supported a campaign in which women were risking their lives to protect millions of able-bodied men back at home. No one, in or out of the Armed Forces, ought to have any illusions over why so many women have been sent to the Gulf. They have been sent there to get us used to the idea that women can die for their country as well as men, and if that is the sort of country we are fighting for—a country willing to sacrifice its sisters and daughters for the New World Order—then there is no place in it for what used to be called a gentleman or for anyone raised in the Christian faith.

—*Thomas Fleming*

AFTER WE'VE attrited all the enemy, we're going to have the New World Order. In the New World Order there will be no more disorder, that much we know. All those people who litter, laze, sprawl, and don't do a lick of work in all those countries that don't function too efficiently because everybody takes siestas all the time, all those slow-on-the-uptake countries with all their low-producing unwork-ethical people, will become efficient, clean, and productive when the New World Order comes. No more piddling

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around. Before the New World Order here in the United States we had the New Age, which was OK, but there wasn't enough order in it. That's over now. Throughout history there were many attempts at New Order. There was Hitler's New Order, there was Nixon's Law & Order, there was Novus Ordo Seclorum—that we still have, it's on the dollar bill—and the Communist Boy Scouts' Order & Discipline. The New World Order will bring to millennial fruition the eternal calls of schoolteachers for "order in the classroom," and the heart-wrenching cries of the world's silent majorities for "peace, quiet, and order." The New World Order will be enforced, maintained, and kept in the forefront of all our activities by the world's greatest, best, and most expensive techno-cop, the U.S. Military. President Bush in a speech referring to the New World Order called the 20th century the 20th "central" by mistake. But maybe it wasn't a mistake, but a reference to the way the New World Order will divide the world into a number of "centrals." In these centrals there will be order. Everyone else gets sent to extraterrestrial penal colonies. The New World Order is related to "orderly behavior," "your order, sir," "ordering before you go out," "we have our orders," and "order in the courtroom." The New World Order will mean very special things to every field of endeavor, area of life, and geographical region. In my case, for instance, it will mean "rhyme and reason," and "clean living" in "crime-free New Orleans." As you can see, I've already started.

—*Andrei Codrescu*

IN MOSCOW, several months ago, I telephoned an American friend to confirm an office appointment. Since I was going by taxi, I asked him how much I ought to pay for the ride. Moscow cabdrivers outside tourist hotels are no better or worse than those in other metropolises, but it always pays to know from a local what a ride ought to cost. My American friend said the trip from my hotel to his office was "a one-pack ride."

What was that supposed to mean? Answer: one pack of Marlboros. Although I was a nonsmoker, I had loaded up for just such emergencies with two cartons of Marlboros at the Kennedy Airport duty-free shop. If you are a foreigner, Soviet cabdrivers tell you in advance: we don't accept rubles, only hard currency and Marlboros or Kents. (Taxi-meters don't mean very much if the driver picks you up at a hotel entrance or sizes you up as a foreigner.) A few days later I went to see my American friend at his home. Before departing, he advised me that the trip to his apartment, a bit further out than his office, was "a two-pack ride."

In fact during the rush hour in Moscow or Leningrad, when cabs are otherwise unavailable, you are advised to stand at the edge of the roadway and wave a pack of Marlboros. Not only will cabs appear out of nowhere but private cars will stop and the driver will ask where you're going. Even cabdrivers with passengers already inside will stop to ask your destination.

These recollections surfaced as I read a news report that the Soviet government has asked the Philip Morris Co. and RJR Nabisco Inc. to supply 34 billion cigarettes (that's 1.7 billion packs) to Soviet smokers. Suddenly, it struck me that President Gorbachev had come up with an ingenious way of providing an acceptable currency without wholly de-legitimizing the already de-legitimized ruble while at the same time meeting the sudden cigarette shortage.

(At the Mezhdunarodnaya Hotel in Moscow where I was staying, there is a sign in one of the bars that says that patrons are forbidden to bring along their own liquor on pain of being fined thirty rubles. In parentheses there is the phrase "payment only in hard currency.")

The reason why U.S. cigarettes like Marlboros, Kents, or Winstons are in such demand are several. One, they taste much better than Soviet cigarettes, although not being a smoker I can't vouch for that. Second, American cigarettes are "*kulturny*," classy because they're American. Third, as a currency, their value is stable because demand never drops. Fourth, the package can be sold profitably if one sells one cigarette at a time. The black market price of a pack of Marlboros was reported by the *Wall Street Journal* to be 20 rubles or $32, quite a markup from the $1.60 duty-free per pack price, but still a cheap taxi-ride.

The cigarette-potato-bread-and-everything shortage reminded me of an old riddle they still tell in Moscow: what would happen if the Soviet Union seized the Sahara Desert? Answer: for the first twenty-five years, nothing, and then there would be a shortage of sand.

—*Arnold Beichman*

BISHOP SPONG'S agitation for the ordination of practicing homosexuals received "moral" support last February from the Special Task Force on Human Sexuality of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Presbyterian commission recommended the ordination of homosexuals as well as the provision of medical and pension benefits to same-sex couples, and their recommendations will be submitted to the church's 1991 General Assembly. This represents a further advance of the radical proposals put forward by a study group that met earlier in Charlotte, North Carolina. Although there seems to be little doubt that this task force is no more representative of the convictions of the majority of Presbyterians than Spong's views are of those of Episcopalians, their behavior makes it plain that traditionalists will have a hard time blocking this recommendation to legitimize conduct that many would consider evidence of moral degeneracy.

The Presbyterian task force, of course, is merely following the lead of San Francisco and a number of other communities that have legally recognized so-called "domestic partnerships." Although the legislation covers a number of different situations, its primary beneficiaries are homosexuals, and its primary victims are traditional family values. Following the first group of "domestic partners" to be registered in San Francisco, an "interdenominational worship service" celebrated this travesty of Christian marriage.

If we distill all the "wisdom" that seems to be embodied in abortion rights ("freedom of choice"), "gay" rights, "no-fault" divorce, and the like, we might conclude that the ideal "lifestyle" for males would be monastic celibacy (no children, no wife, and of course no sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS), and for women,

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lesbianism (no troublesome pregnancies, no abortions, no children, and no AIDS). Perhaps the only thing wrong with this vision is that in a few score years, if adhered to, it would mean no people. This might seem unfortunate, but at least it would leave the environment to proceed on its way untroubled by human manipulation, and thus achieve one of the goals of our "greens" of various shades. Of course, neither would there be any greens around to appreciate it.

The separation in principle and in practice of sexuality from reproduction began in earnest with the widespread use of the birth control pill in the late 1950's. At that time the sociological and moral implications were not fully foreseen, and those who made dire predictions were dismissed as puritans and prudes. But the consequences are now clear: abortion on demand (at a rate approximating one abortion for every two births) is the price we pay for the "freedom" of heterosexual license, and AIDS is the price of homosexual promiscuity. Yet public officials and the media have accepted the dogma, actively promoted by Planned Parenthood and certain "sex educators," that no one is able to abstain from sexual behavior, even for a brief time. The corollary to this is that it is also unrealistic to expect people to abstain from promiscuous sexual relations with all sorts of partners. In other words, we are to presuppose that promiscuity, homosexual as well as heterosexual, is the accepted norm, and that the only way to deal with AIDS and with other sexually transmitted diseases (AIDS has not yet been *officially* designated as such) is by providing the most antiseptic and least contagious conditions under which to engage in highly septic and contagious practices.

It ought to be possible to avoid the dangers of self-righteous condemnation without abandoning the right to call sin *sin* and to warn of the very real and virtually inescapable perils that sexual excesses bring. Many have criticized, and justly so, the efforts of some media and sex educators to call sex with condoms "safe sex," and recently some authorities have gone in for the somewhat more correct expression, "safer sex." But it is time for religious leaders to recognize that by failing to designate perversion and degeneracy as what they are, in the name of a false tolerance, they may very well be creating "safe sin." The pronouncements of people who ought to be moral teachers, such as Spong and the members of the Presbyterian task force, are not causing the problem, but they are contributing to its severity and making recovery more difficult.

—Harold O.J. Brown

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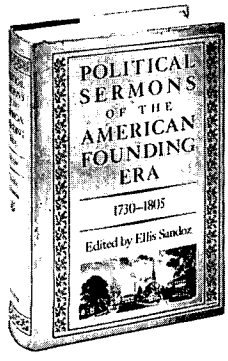

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OUR CONGRATULATIONS go out to Patrick Buchanan, who was honored with the American Values Award last November 28 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The award is given annually by the U.S. Industrial Council Educational Foundation to "distinguished defenders of the traditional values who have their roots in the moral foundations of our country and our civilization."

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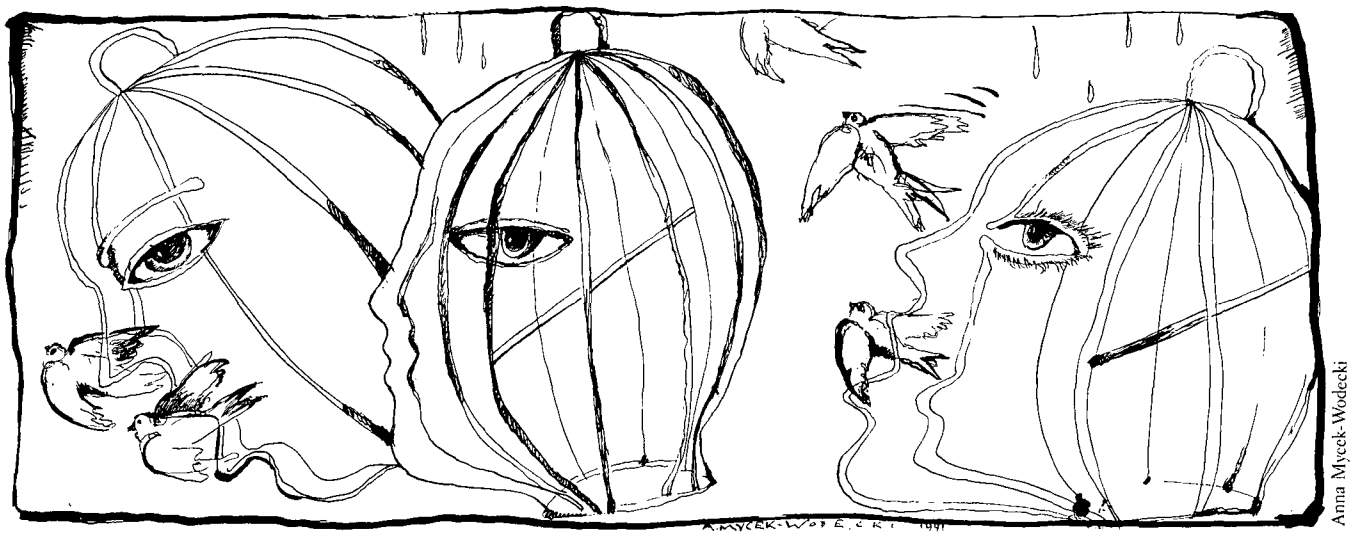

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

The New Fusionism

by Thomas Fleming

"In the government of Virginia," said John Randolph in 1830, "we can't take a step without breaking our shins over some Federal obstacle." Randolph's metaphor was a minor exaggeration 160 years ago; today, it would be a gross understatement, because today that federal obstacle has been erected so high, so deep, so strong, that we can scarcely take a step of any kind. This same federal government stipulates how we shall rear our children, how we may conduct our business, whom we may choose or refuse as our companions. The whole of our private and social lives are hemmed in by various decrees, restrictions, and codes—and not just by the national government. State and local jurisdictions, with what little driblets of power they have left, are just as eager to invade our homes, to tell us what we can smoke, drink, and say.

Randolph himself made a similar complaint in the matter of a billiard table that some members of Congress thought an evil. "In Virginia," he said, "we are and I trust shall ever be alive to States rights. But have the people no rights as against the Assembly? All oppression commences under specious pretexts. I have wondered that no rural, or rather rustic, Hampden has been found to withstand the petty tyranny which has as good a right to take away his wife's looking-glass or frying pan as his billiard table. By what authority is this thing done? Under color of law, I know, but a law in the teeth of all principles of free government."

Randolph was a lover of liberty, an Old Republican who cherished minimal government and distrusted all forms of tyranny including that tyranny of a majority manipulated by a minority that we call democracy. He was almost entirely without cant. Freeing his own slaves, he nonetheless ridiculed the political doctrine of equality as subversive of all liberty. "Sir," he once observed, "I am an aristocrat: I love liberty. I hate equality." This aristocrat was also a radical Jeffersonian who opposed every move to increase the size and scope of government, while at the same time resisting attempts to take away voting rights from smaller free-holders in Virginia.

Randolph once occupied an honorable place in the pantheon of American conservatism. He and the other Old Republicans had so profoundly influenced the course of Southern political thought that Henry Adams selected him—in addition to Captain John Smith and Thomas Jefferson—as one of the pernicious Virginians who needed debunking. Russell Kirk's M.A. thesis, *Randolph of Roanoke*, helped to launch Dr. Kirk's career as the most authentic voice of traditionalist American conservative thought, and this book—imbued with the sentiments of Burke and the traditions of prescriptive right—has been kept in print by the Liberty Fund, an organization whose very name declares its sympathies.

Randolph and Calhoun were once studied by conservatives who also respected Herbert Spenser and Lysandor Spooner, Henry Adams and Irving Babbitt, Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises. It is instructive, occasionally, to spend a morning reading early issues of the *New Individualist Review*. There you will find Milton Friedman almost cheek by jowl with Richard Weaver, a firey interchange

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between Ronald Hamowy and William Buckley on the influence of *National Review*, as well as article after article by competent scholars honestly coming to grips with the reality of the New Deal revolution.

The richness and variety of the right in those days is astonishing. What is especially striking is the absence of a party line that could keep out serious minds. Louis Bromfield (a highly respected northern agrarian novelist), journalist and novelist Rose Wilder Lane, novelist and fruitcake Ayn Rand could all be read with respect by people who looked to George Stigler and Milton Friedman for economic wisdom. All were anticommunist, but there was no consensus on the Cold War. The hysteria over containing and/or rolling back the Communists was manufactured almost entirely by ex-Communists who, if they better understood the motives and goals, wildly overestimated the abilities of their former co-conspirators.

In recent years many of those on the right — reactionaries, conservatives, and libertarians — have had ample cause for melancholy reflection on what their movement had turned into: a narrow-minded ideology that justified the high salaries of fundraisers and foundation managers. Out of the ferment of their discontent it is just possible that something positive might spring up, and last autumn Donald Devine brought together a group of mostly Washington conservatives to consider the prospects for reawakening the right's historic commitment to limited government. At the same time, a group of "Old Right" conservatives and libertarians went to Dallas to hold the first meeting of the John Randolph Club.

The John Randolph Club grew out of a series of meetings and conversations initiated by an exchange of letters between Murray Rothbard and me. As it turned out, we were both disturbed by the development of new and highly rigid orthodoxies among conservatives and libertarians. Big government, minority rights, and globalism, it seems, are the new conservative creed, and it is now heresy to oppose the steady march of progress toward the New World Order. But the libertarians are hardly any better off than the conservatives. Recently a prominent establishment libertarian (Ed Crane of the Cato Institute) attacked Lew Rockwell and other paleolibertarians as social fascists. Why? Because they think that marriage between a man and a woman is preferable to marriage between a man and a man or a man and a sheep.

With the official conservatism turning socialist and official libertarianism turning libertine, we began to wonder where things went wrong. The most obvious answer is that all along, libertarians and traditionalist conservatives needed each other. It was only the presence of the libertarians in the so-called fusionism of the 1950's that prevented the monarchists, authoritarians, and starched-pants dandies with spats and waxed mustaches from taking over, and when the libertarians were kicked out of the coalition, their place was eventually taken by a determined cadre of Trotskyists and Marxist revisionists who proceeded to construct a whole raft of new conservatisms: Big Government conservatism, window of opportunity conservatism, and progressive conservatism. It is simpler to call these people, wherever they happen to be living at the moment, Washington conservatives, because they seem to live in the revolving door between Republican administrations and lobbying organizations. They are, for the most part, shills for whoever will pay them. In the old days, it was big business Republicans; today it is multinational companies and foreign interests. They have changed the words, but the tune is still "M-O-N-E-Y" (the best things in life are free / but you can give 'em to the birds and bees).

In this new conservative movement, Pat Buchanan is regarded as a dangerous bigot, while A.M. Rosenthal of the *New York Times* is celebrated as a great conservative commentator. Welfare is not evil per se, and only needs some adjustments — enterprise zones, workfare, and educational choice — to make it an issue that can secure votes for Republicans, jobs for conservatives, and contracts for loyal supporters "in the community." The new conservatives have all but given up on the natural institutions of family and community and are ready to embrace Checker Finn's latest gimmick: total education for the total state. (Finn is said to be the brains behind the new Education secretary. What a thought.)

It is too late to think about conserving. There is not much left of the Old Republic, which has been bloated into a swollen and cancerous empire that threatens to devour all the life and energy that still exists.

Some of the right's left turn toward big government is the direct result of the libertarian schism and the neoconservative alliance. But if conservatives have suffered from the libertarian defection (or rather expulsion), the reverse is also true. Liberty as a rallying cry has always attracted a certain number of eccentrics who were looking for nothing more exalted than a justification for their vices. (It's no accident that so many lifestyle libertarians gravitate to San Francisco.) With traditionalists and social conservatives out of the way, the path was clear for a takeover by the misfits, the group that Murray Rothbard usually describes as druggies, grifters, and losers.

So much for how and why we have been holding meetings. What do we hope to accomplish? The first piece of business on our agenda is the restoration of debate and free expression. If Pat Buchanan and Joe Sobran criticize the present government of Israel, they are branded as anti-Semites; if Anthony Harrigan calls for a critical scrutiny of unfair Japanese trade practices, he must be a xenophobic mercantilist, an enemy of free enterprise, and a lackey of the textile manufacturers. But if these *ad hominem* attacks on motives are to be permitted, why does no one question the vicious anti-Arab sentiments of the neoconservatives, or the flood of Oriental money in which the conservative free traders are swimming?

To most of the political questions that vex us in our time, I

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have no ready answers. What I do know is that we need more, not less discussion from journalists and scholars whose checks are not signed in Tokyo or Seoul. In the not distant future, we hope, these discussions will lead to the formation of a new political coalition that will not be content with slowing the federal government's rate of growth; if a patient is suffering from a malignant tumor, what kind of a doctor would confine his treatment to chemotherapy to slow the growth, and narcotics to numb the pain? The federal government is just that malignant tumor, and all the conservative Republican doctors can offer are smaller tax increases than the Democrats want, and an infinite number of speeches, magazine articles, and background reports justifying the welfare state, democratic globalism, and a war that was designed to benefit every country in the world except the United States.

It is too late to think about conserving. There is not much left of the old Republic, which has been bloated into a swollen and cancerous empire that threatens to devour all the life and energy that still exists. We don't need to reform the nation; we need to take it back from the occupying army of government officials and managers and interest groups that treat the citizenry like a conquered people.

We need to take back the streets from the criminal classes that now possess them.

We need to take back the courts from the protectors of those same criminal classes.

We need to take back the Congress and state legislatures from the lawyers and politicians who govern only in their own interests.

We need to take back all the power and wealth that has turned Washington from a sleepy Southern town into the most gaudy imperial capital in the world.

But none of this is possible so long as the so-called conservative opposition remains stuck in the rut of anticommunist leftism. There are socialists and radicals today whose ethical and cultural principles are well to the right of Washington conservatism. With the end of the Cold War, and in the dawn of the New World Order, the old anticommunist alliance has lost whatever utility it might once have had. Whatever new coalitions may form, they will be on the basis of what we are for, not just what we are against, and red-baiting will no longer constitute an automatic ticket of admission for any ex-Trotskyist bully boy purged by the left.

Then what will become of the official conservatism of Washington and New York? In the short run, we can predict a brilliant success. They have a lock on all the money and all the institutions created by the right; they have established a cozy relationship with the leftist establishment media who recognize them for what they are: safe and well-groomed lapdogs who bark but never bite. When the day comes that they are no longer needed, the conservatives will be treated like a lower-class sweetheart picked up for a summer affair. I only hope they're given carfare for the long ride home back to their side of town.

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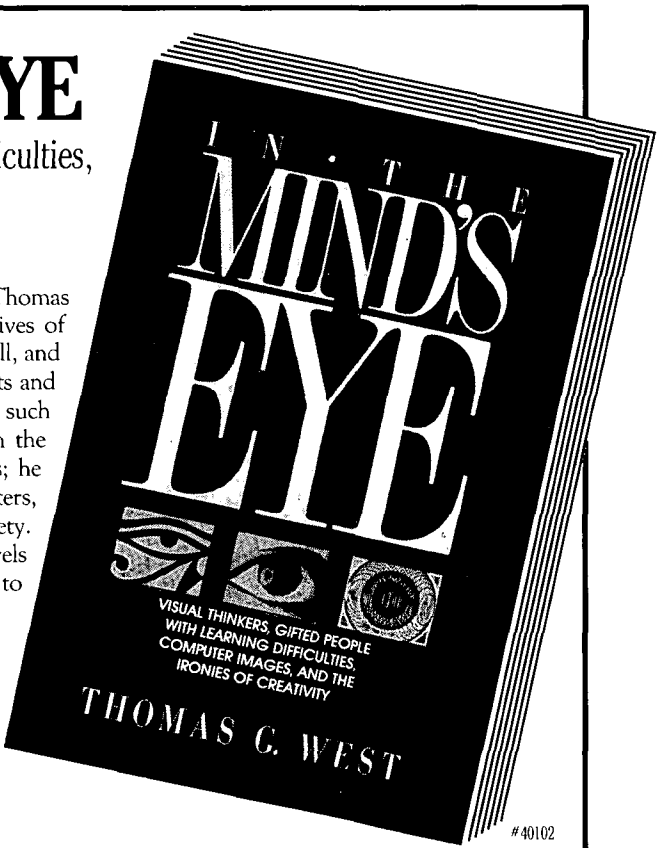

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The Slothful

by Dabney Stuart

You have seen the whales expire on our beaches:
they faintly heave, and flibber about the blowhole
as if sighing for an ocean without oil.
So a culture might quiver as it vanishes.

We long for nothing but our own inertia.
The soughing often mistaken for a grove
of trees waving is the sound we make when we move.
You should not look forward to our departure.

The famous trough we are supposed to feed from
exists only in your mind. It's been enough
since we began to displace the holograph
of your will with our solid kingdom come.

The Vengeful

We deem it meet and orthodox
to store our hearts in Reynolds wrap,
to hunt the cow, to milk the fox,
to think of anger as a map.

The end of life is commonplace;
we stack our weapons in the hall.
We dress for love as outer space.
Our saint is Simon Wiesenthal.

We sleep awake, we dance The Torque,
Our eyes are serpents under glass.
Our password is the three-tined fork.
The future is what comes to pass.

The Decadent

We have been here long enough to learn
there is nothing new under the sun.
We no longer seek even surcease
from boredom, or read Ecclesiastes.

If we feel the faintest insinuation
of desire, as a breeze
hints itself into summer grass,
we imagine what it would be like
to do this, or that, and the glimmer dies.

If regret stirs with its seasoned irk,
or something crawls, or swims, or flies,
we are at peace with such simulation.
We have had it all, and that suffices.

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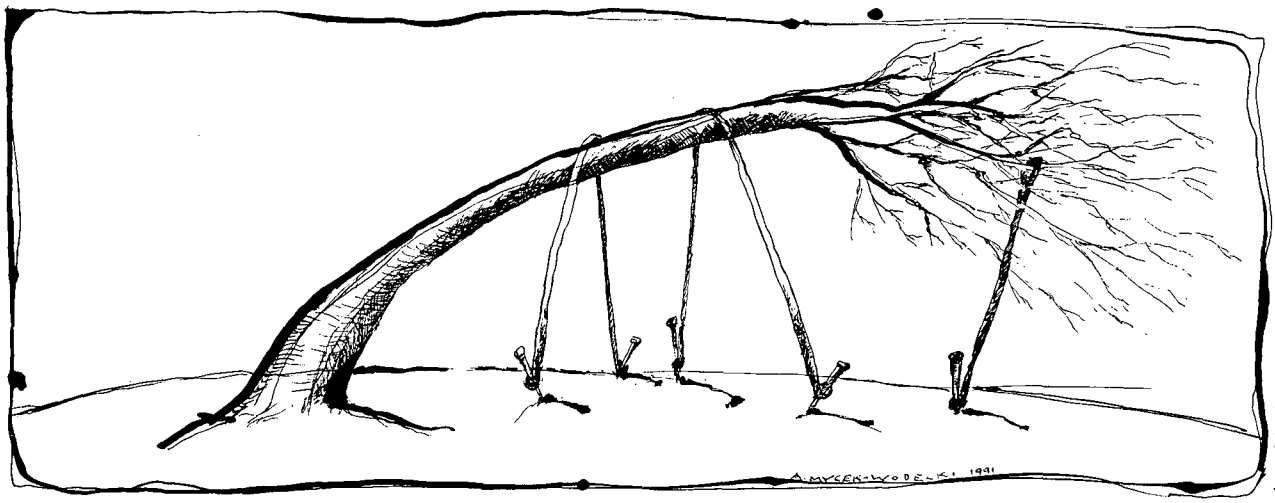

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Beautiful Losers

The Failure of American Conservatism

by Samuel Francis

When T.S. Eliot said that there are no lost causes because there are no won causes, he probably was not thinking of American conservatism. Nearly sixty years after the New Deal, the American right is no closer to challenging its fundamental premises and machinery than when Old Rubberlegs first started priming the pump and scheming to take the United States into a war that turned out to be a social and political revolution. American conservatism, in other words, is a failure, and all the think tanks, magazines, direct mail barons, inaugural balls, and campaign buttons cannot disguise or alter that. Virtually every cause to which conservatives have attached themselves for the past three generations has been lost, and the tide of political and cultural battle is not likely to turn anytime soon.

Not only has the American right lost on such fundamental issues as the fusion of state and economy, the size and scope of government, the globalist course of American foreign policy, the transformation of the Constitution into a meaningless document that serves the special interests of whatever faction can grab it for a while, and the replacement of what is generally called "traditional morality" by a dominant ethic of instant gratification, but also the mainstream of those who today are pleased to call themselves conservatives has come to accept at least the premises and often the full-blown agenda of the left. The movement that came to be known in the 1970's as "neoconservatism," largely Northeastern, urban, and academic in its orientation, is now the defining core of the "permissible" right—that is, what a dominant left-liberal cultural and political elite recognizes and accepts as the right boundary of public discourse.

It remains legally possible (barely) to express sentiments and ideas that are further to the right, but if an elite enjoys cultural hegemony, as the left does, it has no real reason to outlaw its opponents, and indeed encouraging their participation in the debate fosters the illusion of "pluralism" and serves to legitimize the main leftward trend of the debate. Those outside the permissible boundaries of discourse are simply "derationalized" and ignored—as anti-Semites, racists, authoritarians, crackpots, crooks, and other kinds of illicit and irrational fringe elements not in harmonic convergence with the Zeitgeist and therefore on the wrong side of history. That is where the *de facto* alliance of left and neoconservative right has succeeded in relegating those such as journalist Patrick J. Buchanan who dissent from their common core of shared premises and who seriously and repeatedly challenge their hegemony.

Neoconservatism today is usually called simply "conservatism," though it is sometimes known under other labels as well: Fred Barnes' "Big Government conservatism"; HUD Secretary Jack Kemp's "progressive conservatism"; Representative Newt Gingrich's "opportunity conservatism"; Paul Weyrich's "cultural conservatism"; or, most recently, "The New Paradigm," in the phrase coined by White House aide James Pinkerton. Despite the variations among these formulas, all of them envision a far larger and more active central state than the "Old Republicanism" embraced by most conservatives prior to the 1970's, a state that makes it its business to envision a particular arrangement of institutions and beliefs and to design governmental machinery to create them. In the case of "neoconservatism," the principal goal is

Samuel Francis is deputy editorial page editor of the Washington Times.

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the enhancement of economic opportunity through one kind or another of social engineering (enterprise zones, for example) and the establishment of an ethic that regards equality (usually disguised as "equality of opportunity"), economic mobility, affluence, and material gratification as the central meaning of what their exponents often call "the American experiment."

Such goals are not conceptually distinct from those of the Progressivism and liberalism athwart which the American right at one time promised to stand, though the tactics and procedures by which they are to be achieved are somewhat (but not very) different. Indeed, much of what neoconservatives are concerned with is merely process—strategy, tactics, how to win elections, how to broaden the base of the GOP, how to make the government run more effectively, how to achieve "credibility" and exert an "impact"—and not with the ultimate goals themselves, about which there is little debate with those parts of the left that also lie within the permissible range of "pluralistic" dialogue. Given the persistent cultural dominance of the left, a conservatism that limits itself merely to procedural problems tacitly concedes the goals of public action to its enemies and quietly comes to share the premises on which the goals of the left rest. Eventually, having silently and unconsciously accepted the premises and goals, it will also come to accept even the means by which the left has secured its dominance, and the very distinction between "right" and "left" will disappear.

It was this kind of silent acquiescence in the premises of the left that James Burnham identified as a salient characteristic of neoconservatism when it first began to appear in the early 1970's. In an exchange with neoconservative Peter Berger in *National Review* (May 12, 1972), Burnham noted that though neoconservatives had broken with "liberal doctrine," finding it "both intellectually bankrupt and, by and large, pragmatically sterile," they retained "what might be called the emotional gestalt of liberalism, the liberal sensitivity and temperament," the ideo-neurological reflexes and knee jerks of the left. Since that time, those reflexes have not only been recircuited but have been reenforced, so that today the neoconservative "right" almost explicitly accepts and defends the New Deal and its legacy, seeking only to spruce them up and administer them more effectively and more honestly, but not to reverse them or transcend them—Old Right goals are routinely dismissed by the neoconservative right as "impractical."

But Burnham also remarked that "much of conservative doctrine . . . also is, if not quite bankrupt, more and more obsolescent," and the failure of conservatism and its eventual displacement by neoconservative formulas is closely related to its bankruptcy. The survivors of the "Old Right" today spend a good deal of their time complaining about their dethronement by pseudo-conservatives, but those Old Rightists who survive are only the hardiest of the species, ever vigilant for camouflaged predators who slip into their herds. For the most part, their predecessors in the conservative movement of the 1950's and 1960's were not so careful, and indeed many of them failed to understand the ideological dynamics of liberalism, how the liberal regime functioned, or how to distinguish and insulate their own beliefs and organizations against the left. That error was perhaps at least part of what Burnham meant by the "obsolescence" of conservatism. It was an error that was the principal weakness of conservatism and it permitted the eventual triumph of neoconservative forces and the assimilation of the right within the dominant cultural apparatus that serves the left's interests.

The Old Right, composed mainly of the organized conservative resistance formed in the mid-1950's and centered around *National Review*, failed to understand that the revolution had already occurred. Conventional Old Right doctrines revolved around the ideas of a constitutionally limited central government, largely independent local and state government, an entrepreneurial economy of privately owned and operated firms, and a moral and social code of individualism in politics, economy, art, religion, and ethics. These doctrines reflected the institutions and beliefs of the bourgeois elite that had gained political power in the Civil War and prevailed until the dislocations of 20th-century technological and organizational expansion brought forth a new managerial elite that seized power in the reforms of the Progressive Era and the New Deal. These reforms constituted the revolution, not only in the political power of Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and the Democratic Party, but also in the construction of an entire architecture of economic and cultural power, based on bureaucratized corporations and unions, increasingly bureaucratized universities, foundations, churches, and mass media, and fused, directly or indirectly, with a centralized bureaucratic state.

Since the revolution occurred legally and peacefully and assimilated traditional institutions and symbols to its use, it was not immediately apparent that it had taken place at all, that the dominant minority in the United States had circulated, that the bourgeois elite no longer called the shots, or that those who continued to adhere to Old Right doctrines were no longer in a position to "conserve" much of anything. But while the Old Right of the 1950's was in principle aware and critical of the new power structure, it continued to regard itself as essentially "conservative" of an established or traditional order rather than frankly acknowledging its counterrevolutionary mission.

Hence, the entire strategy of the Old Right of the 1950's was to seek accommodation with the new managerial-bureaucratic establishment rather than to challenge it. George H. Nash writes that William F. Buckley, Jr.

> forcefully rejected what he called "the popular and cliché-ridden appeal to the grass-roots" and strove instead to establish a journal which would reach intellectuals. Not all conservatives agreed with this approach, but the young editor-to-be was firm. It was the intellectuals, after all, "who have midwived and implemented the revolution. We have got to have allies among the intellectuals, and we propose to renovate conservatism and see if we can't win some of them around."

Yet while Buckley seemed cognizant of the "revolution" that had transpired and was in fact successful in attracting a number of intellectuals, he failed to see that the new intellectual class as a whole, which had indeed "midwived and implemented the revolution," could not become conservative. It could not do so because its principal social

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function and occupational calling in the new order was to delegitimize the ideas and institutions of conservatism and provide legitimization for the new regime, and its power and rewards as a class depended upon the very bureaucratized cultural organizations that conservatives attacked. Only if conservatism were "renovated" to the point that it no longer rejected the cultural apparatus of the revolution could very many intellectuals be expected to sign up.

Moreover, by focusing its efforts in Manhattan, Washington, and the major centers of the intelligentsia and other sectors of the new elite, Buckley and his conservative colleagues isolated themselves from their natural allies in the "grass roots." While there was clearly a need for intellectual sophistication on the right, the result of Buckley's tactic was to generate a schism between Old Right intellectual cadres and the body of conservative supporters outside its Northeastern urban and academic headquarters. Among these supporters in the 1950's and 1960's there flourished an increasingly bizarre and deracinated wilderness of extremist, conspiratorialist, racialist, and even occultist ideologues who loudly rejected both the Old Right mainstream and the Old Right's new friends in the intellectual and cultural elite, but who failed to attract any but the most marginal and pathological elements in the country and exerted no cultural or political influence at all. At various times in its history, *National Review* has found it necessary to "purge" itself of such adherents, and each catharsis, no matter how prudent, has rendered its "renovated" conservatism less and less palatable to ordinary Americans and more and more acceptable to the Manhattanite intelligentsia *NR* has always sought to attract.

In any case, the Old Right intellectuals for the most part had few links with the "grass roots," the popular, middle-class, and WASP nucleus of traditional American culture. *National Review* itself was not only Manhattanite but also Ivy League and Roman Catholic in its orientation, as well as ex-Communist and ethnic in its editorial composition, and not a few of its brightest stars in the 1950's were personally eccentric, if not outright neurotic. Moreover, few of them reflected the "Protestant Establishment" that by the end of World War II had largely made its peace with the new regime and was scurrying to secure its own future within the managerial state, economy, and culture. Of the 25 conservative intellectuals whose photographs appear on the dust jacket of George H. Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, four are Roman Catholic, seven are Jewish, another seven (including three Jews) are foreign-born, two are Southern or Western in origin, and only five are in any respect representative of the Anglo-Saxon (or at least Anglo-Celtic) Protestant strain in American history and culture (three of the five later converted to Roman Catholicism). Theological meditation competed with free market economic theory as the main interest of many Old Right intellectuals to a far larger degree than had been the case with such pre-World War II skeptics of Progressivism as Albert Jay Nock, H.L. Mencken, or the "America First" opponents of foreign intervention.

The religious, ideological, and ethnic differentiation of the Old Right from the country's Protestant Establishment may have helped push the right's leaders in a more radical direction than they were inclined to go, but it probably also served to cut them off from both the Establishment's declining leadership as well as from the rank and file of Americans outside it. The Old Right could not help but remain an isolated circle of intellectuals and journalists, absorbed in rather esoteric theory, despised by the intellectual elite they hoped to impress and convert, and ignored by most Americans and their political leaders.

The Old Right's political aspirations were no less grotesque than its desire to win acceptance among the intellectuals and followed much the same strategy. Although the remnants of the bourgeois elite retained an important political base in congressional districts remote from the centers of the new regime, they could serve only as a brake on the regime's power and were unable to control either Congress or the presidency. Their inability to do so was directly related to their lack of cultural power, and even when Old Right forces were able to capture the Republican Party in 1964, the disastrous result of Barry Goldwater's candidacy was in large part due to his supporters' lack of access to the national organs of culture and opinion. Subsequent Old Right political efforts concentrated on attempts to gain influence within the political domain of the elite by means of endless searches for suitable presidential candidates who could seize national power at a single blow and through a kind of Fabian tactic of permeating the federal bureaucracy. As a result, there has now emerged an entire generation of what might be called "court conservatives" who devote their careers to place-seeking in the federal government and favor-currying with whatever President or satrap is able to hire them and who have long since abandoned any serious intention of challenging the bureaucratic organism they have infected with their presence.

In the absence of a significant cultural base, such political efforts not only were bound to fail but also had the effect of drawing the right further into the institutional and conceptual framework of the liberal regime. Political maneuver by its nature is a process of bargaining, and the more conservatives have engaged in political action, the more they have found themselves bargaining and compromising with their opponents, who often do not need to bargain at all. Since their opponents on the left, in Congress or the executive branch, have ready access to and sympathy from the mass media, they are able to discredit the men and measures of the right that will not bend to their manipulation. Moreover, the right's preoccupation with the presidency also forces it to seek acceptance by the national media and the dominant culture of the left and focuses its efforts on an institution that is far less susceptible to grass roots influence than Congress. The modern presidency, as the lesson of the hapless Reagan administration shows, is less the master of the bureaucratic elite than its servant, and while a powerful President could subdue and circumvent his own bureaucracy, he could do so consistently only if he were able and willing to mobilize mass support against it from outside the elite.

The political weakness of the Old Right and its failure to understand that it really represented a subordinate and displaced elite rather than a dominant incumbent one were instrumental in its gradual assimilation by the liberal regime. The crucial episode in the assimilation occurred during the Vietnam War, which the Old Right in general supported on

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the grounds of anticommunism. The war itself was a result of misconceived liberal policies and was effectively lost by liberal mismanagement, and there was no good reason for the right (even the anticommunist right) to support it. Yet, as the New Left mounted an attack on the war and broadened the attack to include the bureaucratized university and parts of the leviathan state, the right's response was to defend not only the war itself and sometimes even the liberal policies that were losing it, but also the liberal power centers themselves. The Old Right critique of containment, mounted by anti-interventionists such as Robert Taft and John T. Flynn and by anticommunist interventionists such as Burnham, was forgotten, as was much of the Old Right cultural critique of the domestic liberal regime, which mirrored its globalist regime. It was at this point that the Old Right began to join forces with emerging neoconservative elements, whose concern was entirely with defending the liberal managerial system, foreign and domestic, and which never had the slightest interest in dismantling it. The result of the coalition between the Old Right and neoconservatism has been the adoption by the right of Wilsonian-Rooseveltian globalism and its universalist premises, the diffusion of those premises within the right in defense of what are actually the institutions and goals of the left, and the gradual abandonment of the Old Right goals of reducing the size and scope of centralized power. By swallowing the premises of the left's globalist and messianic foreign policy, the right has wound up regurgitating those same premises domestically. If it is our mission to build democracy and protect human rights in Afghanistan, then why should we not also enforce civil rights in Mississippi and break down the barriers to equality of opportunity everywhere through the sledgehammer of federal power? Conservatives do not yet advocate sending the Special Forces into Bensonhurst and Howard Beach, but the story is not over yet.

To say that the conservatism of the Old Right failed is not to dismiss the important contributions its exponents made to a critical analysis of liberal ideology or all of its work in political theory, international relations, economic and social policy, and religious, philosophical, and cultural thought. The Old Right intelligentsia as a whole was a far more exciting group of thinkers and writers than the post-World War II left produced. Nor does pointing to its failure mean that a serious right was not or is not possible. It is merely to say that the Old Right fundamentally misperceived its own position in and relationship to the emerging managerial regime and that this misperception led it into a mistaken strategy of seeking consensus rather than conflict with the dominant elite of the regime.

It remains possible today to rectify that error by a radical alteration of the right's strategy. Abandoning the illusion that it represents an establishment to be "conserved," a new American right must recognize that its values and goals lie outside and against the establishment and that its natural allies are not in Manhattan, New Haven, and Washington but in the increasingly alienated and threatened strata of Middle America. The strategy of the right should be to enhance the polarization of Middle Americans from the incumbent regime, not to build coalitions with the regime's defenders and beneficiaries. Moreover, since Middle America consists of workers, farmers, suburbanites, and other non- or post-bourgeois groups, as well as small businessmen, it is unlikely that a new right will make much progress in mobilizing them if it simply repeats the ideological formulas of a now long-defunct bourgeois elite and its order. The more salient concerns of post-bourgeois Middle Americans that a new right can express are those of crime, educational collapse, the erosion of their economic status, and the calculated subversion of their social, cultural, and national identity by forces that serve the interests of the elite above them and the underclass below them, but at their expense. A new right, positioning itself in opposition to the elite and its underclass ally, can assert its leadership of alienated Middle Americans and mobilize them in radical opposition to the regime.

A new, radical Middle American Right need not abandon political efforts, but, consistent with its recognition that it is laying siege to a hostile establishment, it ought to realize that political action in a cultural power vacuum will be largely futile. The main focus of a Middle American Right should be the reclamation of cultural power, the patient elaboration of an alternative culture within but against the regime—within the belly of the beast but indigestible by it. Instead of the uselessness of a Diogenes' search for an honest presidential candidate or a Fabian quest for a career in the bureaucracy, a Middle American Right should begin working in and with schools, churches, clubs, women's groups, youth organizations, civic and professional associations, the military and police forces, and even in the much dreaded labor unions to create a radicalized Middle American consciousness that can perceive the ways in which exploitation of the middle classes is institutionalized and understand how it can be resisted. Only when this kind of infrastructure of cultural hegemony is developed can a Middle American Right seek meaningful political power without coalitions with the left and bargaining with the regime.

By swallowing the premises of the left's globalist and messianic foreign policy, the right has wound up regurgitating those same premises domestically.

Eliot may have been right that no cause is really lost because none is really won, but victory and defeat in the struggle for social dominance have little to do with whether the cause is right or wrong. Some ideas have more consequences than others, and those that attach themselves to declining social and political forces have the least consequence of all. By allowing itself to be assimilated by the regime of the left, American conservatism became part of a social and political force that, if not on the decline, is at least confronted by a rising force that seeks to displace it, even as the regime of the left displaced its predecessor. If the American right can disengage from the left and its regime, it can assume leadership of a cause that could be right as well as victorious. But it can do so only if it has the wit and the will to disabuse itself of the illusions that have distracted it almost since its birth. ◁

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Conservative Movement R.I.P.?

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

WICK ALLISON

When one is asked about the future in the context *Chronicles* has set, the obvious response is to talk in political terms. But conservatism is not a political phenomenon. I have always been uncomfortable with references to the "conservative movement" when I read the political press or some of my favorite columnists. It seems like an oxymoron.

Conservativism is a philosophical attitude. To be a conservative is to accept the fallibility of man and the imperfectibility of human institutions. It is an odd kind of skepticism, because it is a skepticism based on, finally, faith. If God created man to be the creature he is, then it is not for us only to accept man as he is but to try to understand man as he is—and to understand joyfully. That requirement for joyful understanding gives the positive dimension to conservatism. In fact, it makes it kind of fun.

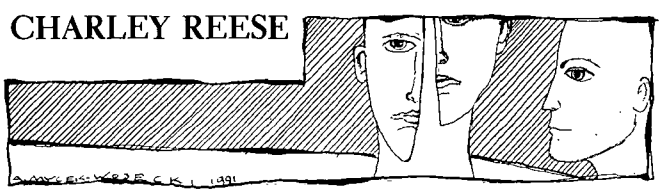
The Founders, despite their differences, were almost uniformly conservative in contemporary terms. Their knowledge of history was deep, and therefore they were not optimistic about the construction of a government that would both preserve liberty and promote the growth and expansion of the common wealth.

In some conservative circles today their lack of optimism translates into pessimism. I would argue there is a profound difference. Pessimism is a surrender of faith, a spiritual shrugging of the shoulders. But the Founders, looking back over five thousand years of history, were not pessimistic; they were realistic about the limitations of human reason and human accomplishment.

Looking forward, our attitude should be the same. Conservatives will never besiege a Bastille, storm a Winter Palace, parade into Havana. We'll simply go about the business of being normal. That means we'll spend a great deal of time reminding our fellow citizens and arguing with our fellow Republicans about what government can be expected to do and what our culture ought to preserve and pass on. If all goes well, we'll keep this magnificent experiment called America going for another century or two. If I'm supposed to have aspirations, that's about the best I can come up with.

Wick Allison is the publisher of National Review.

CHARLEY REESE



To look at the present out of which the future grows one must conclude that American conservatism is now only a footnote in the history of the rise and fall of the American Republic. It has been reduced to a remnant of the body politic.

At the national level, most prominent people who call themselves conservative are not. They are either Republican partisans, like Representative Newt Gingrich, trying to compete for votes by painting the old welfare state with new rhetoric, or they are an American imitation of the British Tory, imperialist to the bone and elitist to the marrow.

The only powerful political movement left in the present is imperialism, or transnationalism. It encompasses both Democrats and Republicans, both those who label themselves liberal and conservative, both the New Right and the

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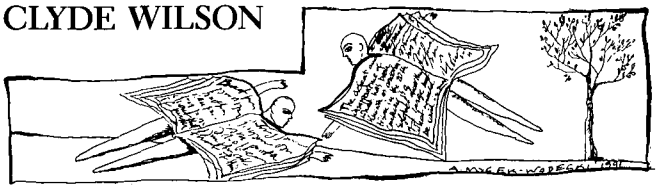
Old Right, as well as those democratic socialists who branded themselves neoconservatives to explain their imperialistic aims. Like the British in the 1920's, they all cling to the fantasy of a superior America, powerful enough militarily and economically to impose what they suppose are its values at a tidy corporate profit on the rest of the world. Most recently they have exulted in a military victory over a Third World country while conveniently ignoring the begging bowl that accompanied the tanks and the necessary acquiescence—not likely to continue—of the Soviet Union. Genuine American conservatives are found only in pockets and are generally denied access to the great organ of propaganda—network television. Thus there is faint hope that seeds of conservative thought can be planted by national leaders.

But a look at the soil itself—the American people—withers even faint hope. Where is there any sign of conservative values among the people? The mobility of the population, its concentration in urban centers, seems to have destroyed any sense of community. The deliberate post-World War II effort to devalue nationalism in public education seems to be the only aspect of public education that has succeeded. There is little sign of enlightened nationalism, only occasional bursts of jingoism and the steady grumbling of the welfare statists who complain of foreign aid only because they want the money spent on themselves.

George Washington said you could not maintain a free republic without virtuous people. Thomas Jefferson said you could not maintain one with ignorant people. They were both right.

Charley Reese is a nationally syndicated columnist.

CLYDE WILSON



The defeat and disappearance of what has been known as conservatism in the 20th century is a subject worthy of a large book. What would be said in such a book would depend on whether we took a historical focus of a few years, a few decades, or a larger span. And on whether we looked at political parties and mass politics, intellectual movements, or far-reaching social change.

It is possible that the most recent American experience in international adventurism has effectively finished off what we have known as conservatism, and also what has been known as liberalism—both swallowed up by the imperial state, for which ideas, principles, and even material interests are expendable. For the latest adventure, unlike earlier ones, has not occurred because of unavoidable conflict, but by deliberate choice.

It would be interesting to pursue Roman analogies and what they suggest about the long-term perils of bankruptcy and proletarianization for the state that undertakes the imperial role. But it is perhaps enough to point out that the bill is not in for the economic and psychic costs, and they cannot be discussed until the present euphoria has passed. And that politicians will be able to obfuscate the costs for a long time.

It would also be interesting to chart the course of movement of intellectual conservatism into the terminal state of vulgarity and triviality in which George Will can be regarded as a leading intellectual. However, I will focus in this brief space on the strange and almost unnoticed failure and betrayal of conservatism as a domestic political movement, despite three resounding national election victories.

The chief reason for this failure is that conservatism allowed itself to be captured within the contaminated vessel of the Republican Party. Our President, who was elected three times on an anti-affirmative action platform, is for affirmative action. And who can gainsay the Great Emancipator of Kuwait? He was elected by millions concerned about the Willie Hortons of the world. We have no evidence that he has done anything about the Willie Hortons. We have no evidence that he wishes to do anything. The only evidence we have is that he wants the votes of those who are concerned.

He was elected, after an explicit promise, by the votes of millions of middle- and working-class Americans who sought some remedy for the government burden on their earnings. They now face increased government spending and greater taxes, to bail out the bureaucracy, the bankers, and the sheiks. Northeastern yuppies who voted for Dukakis may take a tax deduction for the interest on their vacation homes. The millions of middle-class people who voted for Bush cannot take a deduction for the interest paid to buy a car needed to get to work and support the government.

The difference between the Democratic and Republican parties—and this dichotomy can be found in earlier periods of the history of the vile American two-party system—is that the Democrats serve their constituency. The unions, minority groups, bureaucrats, and assorted social enemies who support them can expect to profit by their victory. And also by their defeat, since the other party neither wants to nor can provide effective opposition to their agenda.

The Republicans have been talking about the Emerging Republican Majority, Middle America, the Silent Majority, etc. for more than two decades now. Some pundits have wondered why this Majority has not emerged. The explanation is simple. It has been betrayed by the Republican Party, which wants its votes but not its platform. The only effective conservative movement in recent history in mass politics was that of a non-Republican, George Wallace, which made a far profounder change in American politics than the so-called Reagan Revolution. If Wallace had not badly scared the leaders of both parties, they would not now be giving even lip service to the concerns of Middle America. The function of the Republican Party is to capture and contain those concerns.

Many political movements and tendencies emerged in postwar America—those of Johnson, Nixon, Wallace, Reagan, and others. But the winner has been that tendency that had the least popular support: Nelson Rockefeller's. His Liberal Republicanism of the 1960's postulated that the Republicans could do everything the Democrats could do, but could do it better. (Meanwhile minimizing impact on

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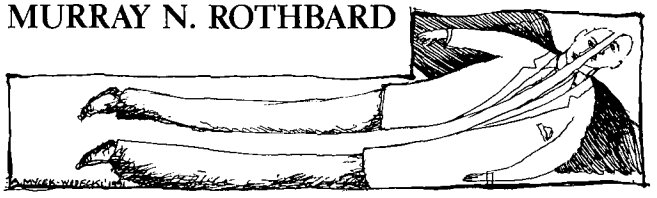
the inherited wealth of the Northeast.) Thanks to the nature and history of the Republican Party, despite unfailing rejection at the polls, that regime is now triumphant.

Clyde Wilson is a professor of history at the University of South Carolina and editor of The Papers of John C. Calhoun.

MURRAY N. ROTHBARD



Access to political power during the 1980's completed the transformation of the old conservative movement into an ignoble scramble for government jobs. The movement was shorn of all principles except two: the major foreign policy axiom of all-out opposition to the Soviet Union and to its satellite Communist parties throughout the globe; and the relatively trivial supply-side axiom of cuts in marginal tax rates. All other aspects and policies of the gigantic welfare-warfare state brought to us by the New Deal and its heirs have been embraced and accelerated by the conservative movement.

Indeed, all Republican administrations since World War II have engaged in an orchestrated minuet with the Democrats, the inevitable result being the continuing advance of statism and the permanent imposition of the leviathan state upon the backs of the American people. Each Democrat regime brings an accelerated intensification of Big Government, accompanied by much hoopla and fanfare: the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the Great Society. Each Republican administration, in the meanwhile, rejecting "reactionary" and "dogmatic" pleas to repeal or roll back statist advance, merely slows down the rate of growth of state power, thereby giving deluded conservatives a crumb or two to cheer about. Indeed, the function of every Republican regime, beginning with Eisenhower, was to be "responsible" and "enlightened" rather than reactionary, to the great plaudits of the liberal media; in short, to consolidate the New Deal or the Great Society, and thus to prepare the push for the next giant step toward collectivism.

The Reagan regime performed the same historical function as its predecessors, the key difference being that this was the first administration to command the allegiance, heart and soul, of the conservative movement, which at least had been healthily skeptical of all previous administrations. Blinded both by admiration for Ronald Reagan and by the lure of patronage, the conservative movement lost the last shreds of its reason for forming in the years after World War II: a burning desire to repeal and abolish every vestige of the leviathan New Deal structure, root and branch.

Conservatives themselves helped along this degeneration by embracing anti-Soviet foreign policy as their overriding principle. Not only did this lead to enthusiastic collaboration in building towards war and much of the economic destructiveness (via taxes, deficits, and military waste) of the welfare-warfare state, but also conservatives' blind devotion to anticommunism and anti-Stalinism led them to embrace warmly and uncritically groups of socialists who differed only marginally, albeit bitterly, from various aspects of Soviet communism. Broadly, all these variants may be grouped together as "democratic socialists" or "social democrats." Whatever each group called itself, be it Trotskyites, Lovestonites, Schachtmanites, Mensheviks, democratic socialists, Social Democrats, Truman-Humphrey Democrats, neoliberals, or neoconservatives, they all really amounted to the same thing.

Trumpeting the virtues of "democracy" or "democratic values" rather than liberty or the rights of private property, all wings of the social democrats glorify and yearn to expand the welfare-warfare state. They invariably favor central government control over diverse states, provinces, or regions, whether inside or outside the United States, and they scorn any limitations upon that centralized power. They are all for a permanent policy of massive global intervention by the United States, aiming toward a form of centralized world government to whip into line any recalcitrant nationalities or rulers of whom they disapprove. While all social democrats, as "market socialists" these days, pay lip service to the virtues and efficiencies of the market economy, for them the market must play a role strictly subordinate to a strong central "democratic" government.

The sudden collapse of Soviet and East European communism in the revolutionary implosion of 1989 has changed drastically the nature of the world and of the problems facing the conservative movement. Suddenly, its prime axiom is admitted by all to be obsolete, and what now? What are supposed to be the guiding principles of conservatism or of American policy now that the Soviet and communist threats have disappeared? Conservatives have split along an old natural fault line: one wing has discovered the pre-1955 Old Right, and has sensibly called for a restoration of the commitment to rolling back the leviathan state and to a foreign policy of "isolationism." The other wing, centrists guided by the powerful ruling elite of neoconservatives, urge us almost desperately to continue a policy of global intervention, despite the loss of its underpinnings. In a deep sense, the inner agenda of the neoconservative branch of social democracy is now starkly revealed: a global crusade to put down all nationalities and regimes throughout the world not subservient to its version of democratic values.

Furthermore, with the collapse of communism, the neoconservative ruling elite is now revealed to be playing precisely the same role in the intellectual or ideological arena that the Republican Party has for decades played in politics: forming a sham "loyal opposition" to the Center Establishment and to the left-liberal media, their very noisy presence serving to form the limits of "respectable" conservatism. Beyond those limits is supposed to reside only "extremism," chaos, and the Old Right, and those can be safely ignored by respectable media opinion.

I am convinced that the first task of genuine conservatism, then, is to throw off neocon control, to reconnect with the great American heartland by unfurling the good old banner of individual liberty, the rights of private property, ultra-minimal government, and a foreign policy devoted to America first and last. It must be a policy once again devoted

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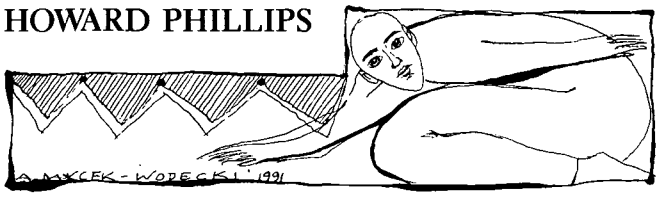
to the abolition of all New Deal and post-New Deal structures of the leviathan state, and to devolving the swollen federal government, especially its executive and its judiciary, into self-governing local polities.

I believe that the great mass of American conservatives, those who wouldn't know a neocon from a bean bag, are with us in these aspirations, as are a good portion of the American people. The neocon elite is rich in wealth and influence, but it is thin on the ground, and hence their evident trepidation at what genuine conservatism could accomplish if roused. The important strategic objective must be to find a way to reach the conservative mass over the heads of their official, self-appointed leaders, structures, and institutions.

Murray N. Rothbard is a professor of economics at the University of Las Vegas, and vice president for academic affairs at the Ludwig von Mises Institute.

HOWARD PHILLIPS



After a decade of Reagan and Bush, the Washington-based conservative movement is at a dead end. Grass-roots supporters have grown weary of the battle, frustrated by political betrayal and by their apparent impotence to achieve significant victories on issues they care about. Those who control the government have been only marginally inconvenienced by antiestablishment protest because, in the context of the present two-party system, fed-up Americans have no place else to go on election day. All too many conservatives have accepted the notion that their role in life is to lose as slowly as possible.

Our experience of the past several decades is that, during Republican presidencies, significant elements of the conservative agenda are repudiated and abandoned—on issues ranging from helping Gorbachev and the "New World Order" to subsidies for Planned Parenthood, the Legal Services Corporation, and the organized homosexual movement. In 1990, only six Republican senators voted against the Clean Air bill. Only 16 Republican representatives voted against the legislation in the House. Out of 100 U.S. senators, only four had the courage to stand up to the homosexual lobby and oppose the Hate Crimes bill. Only eight senators said no to the Americans With Disabilities Act, and only 20 representatives, despite the fact that this legislation requires, for example, the owner of a restaurant to hire "otherwise qualified" AIDS-infected homosexuals for food-handling positions. And, on an issue where the vast resources of the conservatives in the pro-family movement were mobilized, out of 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives only 64 voted to cut off the money for the National Endowment for the Arts.

All too often, self-described conservative organizations have accepted, in operational terms, the notion that there is no "truth" to the right of Ronald Reagan or George Bush. Quite understandably, the conservative rank and file have been demoralized by this courtier style of leadership. After all, "if the trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound, who will heed the call to battle?" No leader has the moral right to lead his forces into combat without a worthy objective and a sound strategy for achieving it.

Yet, which conservative elected officials or organizational representatives are genuinely committed to turning the tide away from the incremental, exponential expansion of the federal government that has accelerated during the Reagan and Bush presidencies? Energies and resources that could be applied to reconstructing our former Republic are instead being expended on petty ambitions and small purposes. Rather than challenging the flawed premises of judicial-bureaucratic statism, many content themselves with arguments over details of a left-wing agenda that ought to be comprehensively repudiated because of its inherent unacceptability. It's past time to reassert the sound premise that the only legitimate purpose of civil government is to safeguard our God-given rights to life, liberty, and property.

Control of the presidency is essential if we are to implement an activist agenda to cut federal taxes and spending to appropriate constitutional size. A President, in one term, can terminate unconstitutional outlays and eliminate much unfair excessive taxation by using his constitutional veto authority and having his veto of revenue and appropriations bills, and even continuing resolutions, sustained by one-third plus one of the members of at least one branch of the Congress of the United States. If revenue bills are vetoed, and the vetoes are sustained, the taxes they anticipate can't be collected. If appropriations bills are vetoed, and the vetoes are sustained, then those agencies, regulations, and programs that are based on appropriations will close down.

Even if the Republican Party were overpowered by a constitutionally conservative candidate, his ability to win the presidency in a two-way race for the popular vote would be severely limited. He could not unite his party without surrendering his agenda. However, the mathematics of the electoral college *does* make it possible to elect a constitutional conservative in a multiparty context. That is why, through the U.S. Taxpayer Alliance, I am working to launch, in time for the 1992 elections, a new political party that advances principles and policy objectives consistent with the Bible and the Constitution of the United States, whose purpose, both by fielding its own candidates and co-endorsing, where appropriate, candidates of other parties, is to establish a right standard for civil government and an electoral rallying point for those who, in agreement with our purposes, choose to join us. Contrary to the prevailing myth, our supporters will *not* be wasting their votes, as they do when they vote for a party or candidate leading them in the wrong direction.

Strong medicine is consumed only when circumstances seem to require it. But even the reluctant patient will take comfort knowing that the strong medicine is available. In God's providence, if we do our jobs well, our countrymen may, in time of extreme crisis, accept what we prescribe.

Howard Phillips is head of the Conservative Caucus in Vienna, Virginia.

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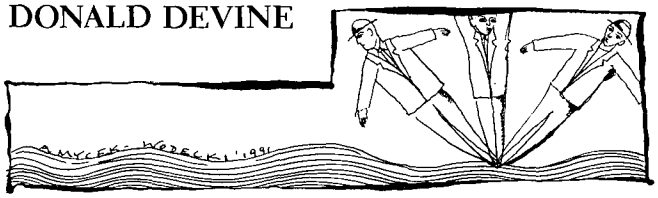
DONALD DEVINE



Asking what is wrong with the conservative coalition is putting last things first. There cannot be a coalition unless there is something around which it coalesces. And there is no "there" there for a conservative coalition.

There is no center. Yes, there are millions who hold conservative values, and there are scores of organizations, perhaps hundreds. But there is no sense of a team, no movement, no élan, no leader, no feeling that we must pull together, not even a conservative community.

There are leaders, but thousands of them, all leading in different directions, not one who could really lead somewhere. It is entrepreneurial individualism run amuck, and I am as guilty as any. For to establish real individualism ego must be superseded by a sense of community, and institutions must be created that channel self-interest. Without real leaders who can also follow, no movement can exist.

If a national test were given, even just to the leaders, it would be impossible to obtain a coherent one-sentence definition of conservatism. At best, there would be libertarian, traditionalist, paleo, neo, internationalist, isolationist, free-enterprise, establishmentarian hyphenated-conservatisms in an impenetrable confusion.

No movement in any coherent sense of the term can take form in Babel. In the past, there was a movement around the definition of "libertarian means in a conservative society for traditionalist ends," but it barely exists today. There was an initial leader, William F. Buckley, Jr., and then Barry Goldwater and then Ronald Reagan; but now there is none. There was a movement that sacrificed to common goals, if not in a single organization, in a few that cooperated with each other, but not anymore.

To a great extent, the original core conservative movement was a victim of its success in creating an electoral coalition around itself. A coalition, by definition, is composed of diverse elements that share only a few common goals. The worst thing conservatives could do today would be to try to build a coalition before it recreates a center around which a coalition could form.

A coalition without a core is vacuous. It is modern interest-group liberalism under a different label. It is the buddy-buddyism of country-club Republicanism without the *noblesse oblige*. It is another amalgam of devouring pressure lobbies that cannot raise bold colors under which honest men and women can march.

So first things first. Conservative leaders must begin the difficult task of submerging some realistic part of self—and at least some of the comfortable and flattering access they hold in Washington—to a higher vision. They must agree upon a definition of the conservative vision of the common good (which necessarily has an individualistic tinge) and set subordinate interests in their proper place, even if this appears too radical to those in the seat of power. Only after this demanding effort can moral courage wrest from Babel a core conservatism worthy of popular support from which a governing coalition can be formed.

A conservative reformation need not start from scratch. Why not begin from the period that successfully launched the movement the first time? Start with the definition of libertarian means in a conservative society for traditionalist ends. Flesh this out with the 1960 conservative movement credo, the Sharon Statement, which listed the essential elements as then understood—individual freedom, God-given so not rightfully limited by arbitrary human force; national government restrictions on that freedom only for national defense, internal order, and the administration of justice; a foreign policy judged by the criterion, "does it serve the just interests of the United States?"; a Constitution appreciated for the genius it showed in reserving the powers not specifically delegated to the nation as problems for the states or the people; and a free market, because only it is compatible with individual freedom, constitutional government, and the satisfaction of peoples' needs for goods and the rewards of work.

Tradition, freedom, limited domestic and foreign government, order, federalism, and free markets—these constituted the originally successful formula. By all means change or add to them if they no longer make sense; but it is time to stop grumbling and blaming George Bush, and solve the real problem—reforming ourselves, even if it means beginning all over again.

Donald Devine is president of a management consulting firm in Alexandria, Virginia.

Reluctant Resident

by John Nixon, Jr.

As a rule, I don't exist.
When I think of wars I've missed
And subterranean upheavals
And plagues of frogs and plagues of weevils,
By simply being not among
Those present, I could sing a song
Of ecstasy and wild thanksgiving
That, as a rule, I'm just not living.

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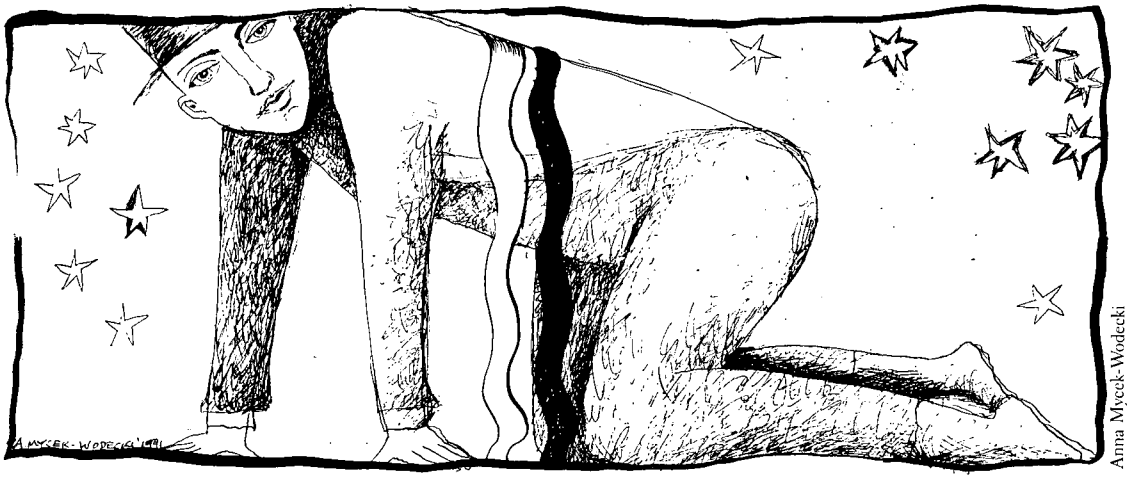
The Goading of America

by Florence King



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Fisher Ames is the Founding Father who draws a blank. Few people today have heard of him, yet he wrote the final version of the First Amendment, and his speech on Jay's Treaty, delivered when he was the leader of the Federalists in the First Congress, was called the finest example of American oratory by Daniel Webster and Abraham Lincoln, both of whom memorized large portions of it to train themselves in the art.

Why then the blackout on Fisher Ames?

He was born in Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1758, entered Harvard at 12, and graduated at 16. He was mustered, with the rest of the class of 1774, to fight in the Revolution, but his militia unit saw no action. After Independence he taught himself law and went into practice, farming the family lands on the side, until politics called.

The Ames home seems to have been a cocoon of idyllic happiness. His wife evinced none of the nascent feminism of Abigail Adams. She gave him six sons and a daughter, who received large chunks of paternal quality time thanks to the pleasure Ames took in inventing and playing educational games. He also got along well with his in-laws; his letters to brother-in-law Thomas Dwight are as warm as they are voluminous.

Fisher Ames was called a "sweet" man by his contemporaries. His first biographer, writing shortly after his death, spoke of "the charms of his conversation and manners [that] won affection" and "the delicacy, the ardor, and constancy with which he cherished his friends," and said: "He had a perfect command of his temper; his anger never proceeded to passion, nor his sense of injury to revenge."

No one sounds less like a misanthrope, yet Fisher Ames had a bleak opinion of human nature. "Our mistake is in supposing men better than they are. They are bad, and will act their character out," he wrote. He also insured his absence from history textbooks with his condemnation of government of the people, by the people, and for the people, proclaiming: "Our disease is democracy. Democracy is a troubled spirit, fated never to rest, and whose dreams, if it sleeps, present only visions of hell."

Ames's fellow Federalist and philosophical soulmate, Alexander Hamilton, held the same views and just as frequently aired them. It being impossible, however, to ignore Hamilton in the textbooks, it has been the custom to soft-pedal his opinions of mankind and democracy—for example, the typical high-school or college text will say, "Hamilton distrusted the people," when in actual fact he said: "The people! The people, sir, are a great beast!"

Both Ames and Hamilton, and in a later era Henry Adams, were sociable men with a wide circle of friends who nonetheless qualify for conditional membership in the ranks of misanthropy. As Federalists, Ames and Hamilton believed in a government controlled by "the wise, the rich, and the good," the same philosophy held by Henry Adams, who was nominally a Democrat. The views of all three men amounted to what we now call elitism. Since the elitist hates the masses, and since the masses make up the vast majority of the human race, the elitist conservative is, numerically speaking, a practicing misanthrope.

In Ames's case, his basic outlook was exacerbated by a political event that goaded him into a bitter hatred of mankind. It is no exaggeration to say that he was frightened into misanthropy by the French Revolution.

As word of the excesses of the Terror filtered in—summary executions, blood-drinking, cannibalism, massacres of nuns, the sexual dismemberment of the Princess de Lamballe, accusations of incest against Marie Antoinette—all done in the name of "the People," Ames coined the word "mobocracy" and likened France to "a Cerberus gaping with ten thousand throats, all parched and thirsting for fresh blood . . . tyranny more vindictive, unfeeling, and rapacious than that of Tiberius, Nero, or Caligula, or any single despot that ever existed."

Even after the Terror ended, his sensitive mind and fastidious nature compelled him to dwell on it: "Behold France, that open hell, still ringing with agonies and

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This article is excerpted from Florence King's forthcoming book, With Charity Toward None: A Misanthropy Primer, *to be published by St. Martin's Press early next year.*

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blasphemies, still smoking with sufferings and crimes."

Ames was not alone in his fears. Burke in England reacted the same way. The French Revolution probably created more misanthropes than any other event in history. In other bloodbaths the evildoers have been exotic foreign marauders or nations within nations—Huns, Bolsheviks, Nazis, Khmer Rouge—but in the France of the Terror they were *the People*, humanity's uppercase whole.

The French Revolution frightened Jefferson and his democratic republicans too, but for a very different reason. The conservative Federalists, fearing the people, wanted a strong central government with a powerful executive branch. But the liberal Jeffersonians, fearing kings, wanted separation of powers, with checks and balances to control the executive, whom they saw as a potential Louis XVI ever ready to abridge the people's rights. To Ames, this amounted to a deliberate weakening of executive authority inflicted on the Constitution by those who imagined all government to be a Bourbon king.

Ames deplored "persons clad in English broadcloth and Irish linen who import their conveniences from England and their politics from France." He meant Thomas Jefferson, whom he loathed, considering him a dupe of the French Enlightenment's naive, optimistic faith in the essential goodness of human nature. Whenever anyone quoted Jefferson's "all men are created equal," Ames shot back: "but differ greatly in the sequel."

The "Jeffs," as Ames called the democratic republicans, moved him to savage eloquence: "The crimes they can excuse, and even persuade themselves to call virtues, they do not blush to commit. They foresee little and dread little of what they foresee. They learn to throw their eyes beyond the gulf of revolution, confusion, and civil war, which yawns at their feet, to behold an Eden of primitive innocence, equality, and liberty. . . . The rights of man are to be established by being solemnly proclaimed, and printed, so that every citizen shall have a copy. Avarice, ambition, revenge, and rage will be disenchanted from all hearts and die there; man will be regenerated . . . and the glorious work of that perfectibility of the species, foretold by Condorcet, will begin."

To the republican claim that anarchy could be avoided by giving the people so much freedom that they would have nothing to rebel against, Ames countered, "a stomach spoiled by sweets will loathe its medicines." Human nature being what it is, he said, people will always find something to rebel against; if nothing else, envy will make them crave "the power to make others wretched."

He predicted the rise of what he called "factions" and we call pressure groups: "A combination of a very small minority can effectually defeat the authority of the national will. . . . Suppose at first their numbers to be exceedingly few, their efforts will for that reason be so much the greater. They will call themselves the People; they will in their name arraign every act of government as wicked and weak; they will oblige the rulers to stand forever on the defensive. . . . With a venal press at command, concealing their number and their infamy, is it to be doubted that the ignorant will soon or late unite with the vicious?"

But, the democratic republicans argued, the majority rules! No, said Ames, they don't. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and most people are unwilling to pay it: "The virtuous, who do not wish to control the society, but quietly to enjoy its protection; the enterprising merchant, the thriving tradesman, the careful farmer, will be engrossed by the toils of their business, and will have little time or inclination for the unprofitable and disquieting pursuit of politics."

The only eternally vigilant citizens in a democracy, Ames warned, will be members of factions whose ceaseless demands will cause "a state of agitation that is justly terrible to all who love their ease. . . . It tries and wears out the strengths of the government and the temper of the people. It is a game which the factious will never be weary of playing, for conquering parties never content themselves with half the fruits of victory."

Ames opposed the addition of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution, believing that the Magna Charta guaranteed everything that needed to be guaranteed. A member of Congress when the Bill of Rights was introduced, he wrote scathingly in a letter to Thomas Dwight:

> Mr. Madison has introduced his long expected amendments. They are the fruit of much labor and research. He has hunted up all the grievances and complaints of newspapers, all the articles of conventions, and the small talk of their debates. It contains a bill of rights, the right of enjoying property, of changing the government at pleasure, freedom of the press, of conscience, of juries, exemption from general warrants, gradual increase of representatives. . . . This is the substance. There is too much of it. Oh! I had forgot, the right of the people to bear arms. *Risum teneatis amici*? [Can we restrain our laughter?] Upon the whole, it may do some good towards quieting men, who attend to sounds only, and may get the mover some popularity, which he wishes.

Ames wrote the final version of the First Amendment not because he approved of it, but simply to bring literary order to the unwieldy bundle of rights that Madison amassed.

As time went on and his health failed, Ames's bitterness increased. When Jefferson was elected President he said: "We are in the hands of the philosophers of Lilliput." As for the Louisiana Purchase, it was "a Gallo-Hispano-Indian Omnium Gatherum" destined to produce even more factions and lead us down that fatal Roman road from a republic ruled by laws to an empire ruled by power.

He continued to pound away at democracy. "What other form of civil rule so irresistibly tends to free vice from restraint and to subject virtue to persecution?" "There is universally a presumption in democracy that promises everything, and at the same time an imbecility that can accomplish nothing, not even preserve itself." "We are sliding down into the mire of a democracy, which pollutes the morals of the citizens before it swallows up their liberties."

Five years before his death he wrote Thomas Dwight: "Our country is too big for union, too sordid for patriotism, too democratic for liberty." He was glad to be out of politics: "Nor will I any longer be at the trouble to govern this

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country. I am no Atlas, and my shoulders ache."

In the end, he seemed to adopt a broader misanthropy extending beyond American politics to the entire race of mankind: "Indeed I consider the whole civilized world as metal thrown back into the furnace, to be melted over again."

Most people know that John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died at a ripe age on the same day: July 4, 1826. Given the superstitious weight of the number *three*, a study of the life of Fisher Ames concludes with a chill down the spine, for Ames died of tuberculosis at age fifty on July 4, 1808.

The Grim Reaper's unhealthy interest in America's birthday takes on ominous significance when we examine our present national mood in the light of Fisher Ames's warnings about factionalism.

Our underlying fear that there is no national glue holding us together has always been embarrassingly obvious. Whenever calamity strikes—Pearl Harbor, Dallas, the Iranian hostages, the Challenger explosion—we give ourselves away with a verbal pat on the back that we recite with conspicuous relief: "It brought us together."

Collecting *Götterdammerungs* in the cause of union will no longer work. There is now so much *pluribus* in the *unum* that everybody is somebody's "them."

Affirmative action is our "French Revolution," goading us into misanthropy as surely as the excesses of the Terror goaded Fisher Ames. It has sent a twist through the national belly, as anyone who knows anything about this country might have predicted, for when you hit Americans in the college education, you hit them where they live.

As a childless spinster I have no personal stake in college admissions but I have felt that twist in the belly. I call it "the copy-editor feeling."

Affirmative action has been in operation long enough now for its effects to show up in our daily lives. Business and professional people in every field are regularly stunned by the lack of basic competence in entry-level employees. I see it in publishing; our dumbed-down educational system no longer produces enough people capable of doing literature's housekeeping chores. Our democratic classrooms are full of students who ought to be turning mops and shovels instead of pages, but they "graduate" and realize the dream of equality by becoming, among other things, copy editors.

College is the most sacred of our sacred cows, the first rung on the ladder of success, the cornerstone of the American Dream of advancement through merit alone. The fury that bright students and their parents feel when a college place goes to someone less qualified is the fury I feel at the thought of my writing falling into the hands of a semiliterate copy editor who did not deserve to be hired, but had to be hired because a publishing house or a magazine or a newspaper needed somebody of this race or that ethnicity, or because they needed a she instead of a he, or because the job applicant was a dyslexic and "needed" to be a copy editor to bolster his "self-esteem"—and lest you think that can't happen, check out the Americans With Disabilities Act.

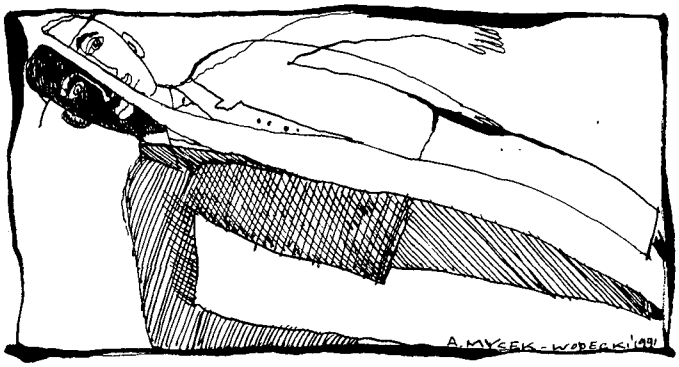
I know that I can sit here at the computer for twelve or fifteen hours, going over and over what I've written, reworking sentences until I am sure I have said what I wanted to say in the simplest, clearest way possible; I can work until dawn, shaking from coffee, parched from cigarettes, dizzy from exhaustion, and fall into bed to dream of green words on a black screen. . . . *but it won't matter because somebody is going to screw me up.*

What's the use? is becoming our national war cry. Copious tears have been shed over despairing rage in the ghetto, but there's more than one kind of despairing rage, and more than one kind of victim. The talented, ambitious student who cracks the books to get into college, only to be passed over for someone less deserving, thinks *what's the use?* and then feels the twist in the belly. His parents, who have worked themselves ragged to give him a college education, think *what's the use?* and then feel the twist in the belly. The professor who demands excellence from his students, only to find himself charged with elitism, thinks *what's the use?* and then feels the twist in the belly.

The present mood of America, especially on college campuses, recalls Robinson Jeffers's phrase, "something in the air that hates humanity." Assessing the Civil Rights Act of 1990, Thomas Sowell lays it on the line:

> I see no reason why it can't happen here. Nothing is easier than to start a spiral of racial confrontations, and nothing is harder than to stop it . . . we will have quotas set in concrete, no matter how much people deny it. And the hatred that is going to grow out of that is going to be something like we've never seen. . . . There's a consolation in being as old as I am. I don't think that I'm going to live to see the terrible trends that are setting in, particularly in race relations, come to their conclusion. I certainly would not want to be here for that.

Affirmative action was designed originally for "women and other minorities," but the phrase is becoming increasingly meaningless, especially in the area of college admissions. Female conscientiousness and eagerness to please have always made women good students and natural test takers. Jews have gloried in scholarship throughout the ages, and Asians of both sexes score so high on SATs and IQ tests that they regard affirmative action as an impediment. As Stuart Rothenberg reports: "[T]hey don't see themselves as an embattled minority."



Affirmative action has degenerated into favoritism for blacks for the sake of keeping the racial peace, but the favor is pure chimera. Affirmative action is to blacks what chivalry

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is to women. When women are defined as helpless, when they are treated as if they are helpless, when they go along with the charade and pretend to be helpless, they eventually become helpless. One would expect feminists, of all people, to grasp this simple analogy, but like most free American citizens nowadays, they go along to get along, and they will go anywhere.

It is now illegal in California to give blacks IQ tests. Atlanta will follow suit if some educators there have their way. Noting that whites constitute only 6 percent of the city's public school enrollment but 45 percent of its gifted and talented program, Thelma Mumford-Glover, the program director, has devised a plan to get more blacks into it:

The Alice-in-Wonderland insistence of IQ-test innovators that down is up, bad is good, low is high; and the hysterical contention of Egyptomaniacs that white is literally black, raise the question of whether blacks as a group are becoming misanthropic.

"We recommend the elimination of IQ and achievement tests from the criteria."

Nancy Amuleru-Marshall, director of research for the Atlanta public schools, seconded the motion with a statement of such sublime ignorance of the connection between premise and conclusion that it has to be read twice: "Any tests that emphasize logical, analytical methods of problem-solving will be biased against minorities." The crimes these so-called educators can excuse and even persuade themselves to call virtues they do not blush to commit, so Atlanta is developing IQ tests based on "athletic ability, 'street smarts,' and interpersonal skills."

Meanwhile, the philosophers of Lilliput are busy in the self-esteem division of affirmative action. Claiming that the study of Western civilization is "cultural genocide" and "intellect victimization" aimed at blacks, Afrocentrists are demanding that curricula at all levels be rewritten to include the contributions of black Africa—which assay out to just about everything ever invented, written, and built thanks to the scholarly technique they have devised: the mugging of ancient Egypt.

Around 1915 there was a popular vaudeville number called "The Irish Were Egyptians Once." Now a growing band of black scholars is insisting that blacks were. This is more than educational pluralism or equal time. It is a deliberate attempt to denigrate and destroy European culture, for by placing themselves in ancient Egypt, blacks can claim that they antedated and influenced ancient Greece, and thus take credit for all the seminal discoveries in mathematics, architecture, sculpture, astronomy, and philosophy that make up Western civilization.

This is precisely what they are doing. The leading Egyptomaniacs—Martin Bernal of Cornell, Asa G. Hilliard III of Georgia State, Theophile J. Obenga of Gabon—contend that Greek philosophers "sat at the feet" of black Egyptian priests, who taught them all they knew. Hilliard also claims that Rameses, King Tut, Moses, Cleopatra, Jesus, Buddha, and Aesop were black; and that study at "the great African universities" was "fairly common" among the ancestors of American slaves. He concludes: "Since Africa is widely believed to be the birthplace of the human race, it follows that Africa was the birthplace of mathematics and science." *It follows?* If geometry and structural engineering had been based on that kind of logic, the pyramids would have collapsed on the Jewish slaves that the black Egyptians owned.

The most outlandish claim comes from an Oregon teacher, Carolyn Leonard, who has solved the riddle of the Sphinx: "Napoleon shot off its nose to alter the facial features so people wouldn't know it was African." This happened to a lot of old statues, according to Leonard. "They were not eroded by time, but deliberately altered to rid them of the vestiges of African features."

Afrocentrism is catching on. Stanford University has already yielded once on the content of its Western Civilization course and, having so readily shown weakness, will no doubt be pressured to yield some more. Sphinxologist Leonard is ensconced in the Portland school system with the glorious title of Coordinator of the Multicultural-Multiethnic Education Office. The New York State Department of Education has created a new "curriculum of inclusion." And in Washington, D.C., a former 60's activist, Albena Walker, is conducting a "pilot program" in one elementary school. According to the *Washington Times*, her curriculum employs yoga. ("In through the noses, out through the mouths. . . . all the spiritual sciences have their roots in Africa. . . . Invoke your ancestors, breath in, breath out.")

John Leo of *U.S. News & World Report* calls Afrocentrism "a sort of Tawana Brawley theory of history, in which facts do not matter, only resentments and group solidarity." However, Leo adds that when he called seven prominent Egyptologists at random to ask their opinion on the Black Egypt theory, all seven said it was not true—"then asked that their names not be used." One told him it was "politically too hot" to get into.

Egyptologists tend to be dependent on grants from foundations, which are dependent on government tax laws. Most people erudite enough to dispute Afrocentrism are sucking on some public or semipublic tit, which explains why only four scholars so far have come forward to do battle. Two of them are unassailable emeriti of history almost as eternal as the pyramids themselves: Henry Steele Commager and Arthur J. Schlesinger, Jr. The other two are William H. McNeill and Diane Ravitch, who was called "Miss Daisy" by the offended Egyptomaniacs.

The four have formed the Committee of Scholars in Defense of History, but who will be brave enough to lend them public support? Certainly not the enterprising merchant, the thriving tradesman, the careful farmer, or the rest of our virtuous citizenry who do not wish to control society, but quietly to enjoy its protection and send their children to its schools. They, who have little time or inclination for the unprofitable and disquieting task of being called racists, will

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simply grumble in private until they wake up one morning and find that Afro Ed has become a required course in every school in America, and nobody will know how it happened.

Hatred of truth is misanthropy in the fullest sense because it denotes a hatred of the human spirit at its most noble. The Alice-in-Wonderland insistence of IQ-test innovators that down is up, bad is good, low is high; and the hysterical contention of Egyptomaniacs that white is literally black, raise the question of whether blacks as a group are becoming misanthropic.

They no longer regard whites as the only devils in their private hell. In recent years they have begun directing bitter enmity at other races and ethnic groups; increasingly, they seem to be saying that anyone who is not black is white.

Miami is a flashpoint for black-Hispanic tensions. Black accusations of brutality against Hispanic police pulsate with the same frenzied quality of similar cases against white police in the 60's. They also are showing the same tendency to turn into *causes célèbres*, such as last year's well-publicized trial of an Hispanic officer who shot a black motorcyclist who tried to run over him. The Miami police force itself has divided along racial lines: black officers have charged that Hispanic officers are slow to respond to back-up calls from them.

In "Hispanics vs. Blacks in Houston," about the ongoing struggle for municipal power, *Newsweek* reporter Ginny Carroll writes: "The reigning assumption seems to be that the nation's two largest minorities will have to duke it out, while white control remains intact . . . the animus between [Hispanics] and Houston blacks is likely to worsen."

In my own area, blacks have built up a head of steam over newly arrived Central Americans. Arlandria, a long-time black section of Alexandria, is now home to an enclave of Salvadorans and it is ready to boil over. "They can't stand each other," said a social worker.

A study by the University of Chicago's Population Research Center suggests one reason why blacks resent Hispanics. The study found that Hispanics who were perceived as white had little difficulty moving into white suburbs, while Hispanics who appeared to be black were subject to the same discrimination patterns as American-born blacks. Said study director Douglas S. Massey: "Hispanics are primarily white. They are apparently more accepted as neighbors than blacks." Idealists will say that Hispanics, having a foot in both camps, will "educate" their new white neighbors, but anyone who knows how human nature really works can see where this split is headed. As a Herman Wouk character put it: "The great unwashed worship the washed."

Black hostility toward Asians has mounted steadily in the face of Asian business success, which many inner-city blacks attribute to a government plot, and the superior academic performance of Asian students in tests that are supposedly biased in favor of whites. To make matters worse, a personality conflict freighted with irony has also emerged. Explaining what it is about Asians that blacks don't like, the embattled Korean grocer whose Brooklyn store has been the target of a year-long black boycott told the *Washington Post*: "Because we don't laugh so much and don't smile so much, it doesn't seem like we're very kind people." Blacks are now demanding smiling good cheer of Asians just as white Southerners once demanded it of them.

In *Do the Right Thing*, a desperate Korean about to be attacked by blacks cries, "Me no white. Me no white. Me black." But it does no good. To the attackers he is white because he is not black. The Virginia State Employment Commission seems to think along the same lines. According to *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editor Robert Holland, who unearthed a copy of it, the Commission has a conversion table to help them rig aptitude-test scores on the basis of race (a practice politely known as "score adjustments"). Blacks and Hispanics are listed separately by name, but the category known as "Other" consists of whites—and Asians.

Black anti-Semitism has taken the same bizarre turn. Said Toni Morrison in *Time*: "What I find is a lot of black people who believe that Jews in this country, by and large, have become white. They behave like white people rather than Jewish people."

Rachel Flick confronted the same attitude at a 1988 black-Jewish conference in Atlanta convened to repair the damage between the two groups. "What emerged in Atlanta, moreover, was that interest in repairing the alliance is one-sided," said Flick. "For Jews of the Reform tradition, as most of the civil-rights activists are, an alliance with the downtrodden is an essential part of feeling Jewish. But for blacks, Jews are white—a point tactfully and truthfully offered by Benjamin Hooks of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People."

As a final fillip, blacks have thrown down the gauntlet to feminists. To repair the damage done to poor black males by their female-dominated, fatherless environments, the growing movement by black educators to segregate boys into separate classes, or even separate schools staffed exclusively by black male teachers, can only undermine the whole concept of sexual equality and re-invent Freudianism, complete with new-old buzzwords like "emasculation."

Hispanics, Asians, Jews, women—blacks are flailing their way into misanthropy minority by minority, interest group by interest group, faction by faction. If it continues, our Omnium Gatherum might well achieve a unity nobody bargained for.

A few years ago, while having coffee in my favorite diner, I eavesdropped on a conversation between two good ole boys who were discussing the race for the 1984 Democratic presidential nomination. This is what I overheard:

"Hey, T.J., you know whut?"

"Whuzzat, Dwayne?"

"If the Jews hate Jesse Jackson, they cain't be too bad."

Political scientists would call this a realignment but in fact it is a movement of the earth. If Dwayne and T.J. can become good ole goys, anything can happen. If blacks continue on their misanthropic way they will eventually goad the rest of the population into a monolithic white race with some only-in-America touches. Having given "Protestant Ethic" a new meaning, Asians will increasingly think of themselves, and be thought of, as white. The concept of "ethnics" will vanish altogether as all whites adopt the Eurocentrism of which we presently stand accused—and Wasps will finally stop describing as "foreign looking" anyone who does not turn pink and blister after an hour in the sun. ◁

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The Isolationist Enigma

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"We assert that no nation can long endure half republic and half empire."
—Democratic National Platform, 1900

The Colonel: The Life and Wars of Henry Stimson, 1867-1950
by Godfrey Hodgson
New York: Alfred A. Knopf;
402 pp., $24.95

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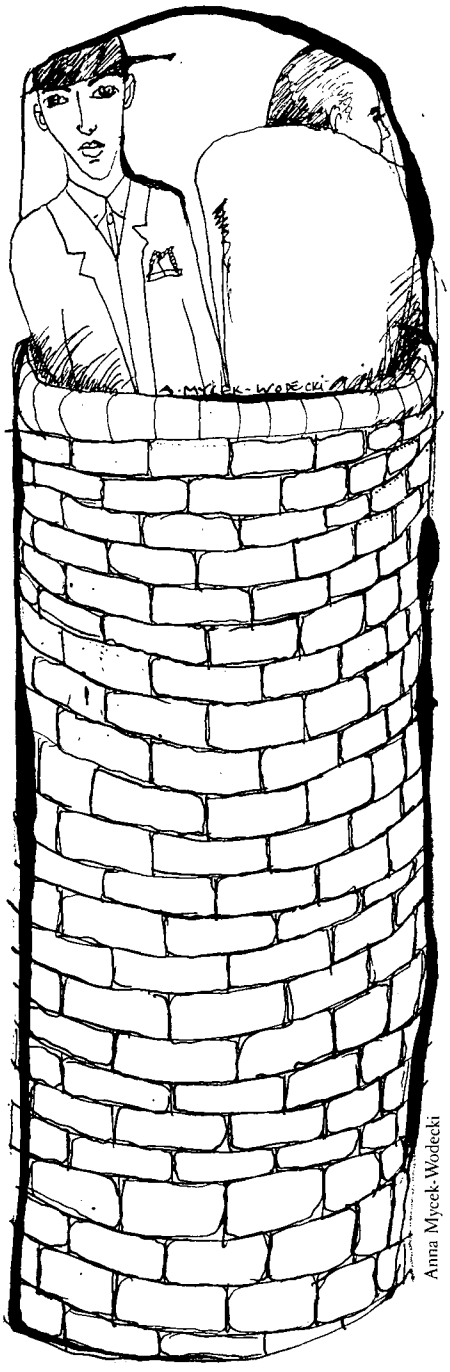
According to Godfrey Hodgson, Henry L. Stimson—secretary of war for William Howard Taft, secretary of state for Herbert Hoover, and, again, secretary of war, this time under Franklin D. Roosevelt—"was identified with the dangerous idea that it is America's destiny to lead the world, and the drives that had led him to that conviction come from deep in the American past. But, when all else is said and done, he was one of the great guardians of the Republic, one of those to whom Plato said the fullest honor should be given because he preserved us from our enemies." If only he had preserved us from ourselves as well.

Godfrey Hodgson, who is currently foreign editor of *The Independent* in London, was Washington correspondent for the London *Observer* from 1967 to 1971; also he has taught at Harvard, Yale, and other American universities and is described by his American publisher as a frequent lecturer in the United States. Thus credentialed, he has included in his biography of this distinguished American statesman and warrior glib glosses on the topic of isolationism in the United States in the 20th century and a silly summary of American immigration reform in the 1920's; an equation of American isolationists between the two World Wars with H.L. Mencken's *booboisie* (Mencken!—who loathed the Brits and in 1914 hoped that the Germans would be in Paris before Christmas); and a declaration that "Stimson, in 1939 and 1940, was the American Churchill. He was articulating the New Deal Democrats' instincts more clearly than their own leaders. Beyond Left and Right, above Republican and Democrat, he was setting forth the lasting principles of the American tradition." Elsewhere, he remarks in passing: "In the last analysis [isolationism] was not about world politics, but about American politics." That is, of course, a profoundly true statement. Why didn't Mr. Hodgson pay due attention to it in his book?


Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Henry Stimson was indeed a grand old man of a type (morally, not intellectually) that today is as dead as the dodo. And it is indisputable, as Hodgson amply shows, that by keeping Roosevelt's mind opposed to Churchill's passion for military feints and parryings and directed instead toward an all-out assault on what Hodgson calls "the citadel of Nazism," he made a major contribution to the Allied war effort. Yet to praise Stimson so unstintingly as the preserver of the "Republic" is much less a rash act than it is an uninformed one. For this "Republican" was a man who held ideas of republican government that were incongruent, in many important ways, with the republicans who had designed the American Republic and set it in motion. "His conception of the role of the executive in constitutional law," Hodgson writes, "was robust, to say the least: it could verge on the scarcely disguised expression of the ancient and profoundly un-American code of statecraft that is summed up in the phrase

Chilton Williamson, Jr. is senior book editor for Chronicles.

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raison d'être." And: "[Nothing] in Stimson's long experience—from the affair of General Ainsworth by way of the Versailles Treaty and the foreign policy of the Hoover administration to his own recent confirmation hearings [at which the Senate isolationists had given him a rough time]—[had] imbued him with any very high regard for Congress's prerogatives in foreign affairs." Henry Stimson was a great patriot surely, but was he a great republican as well?

It is unsurprising to find Mr. Hodgson—a citizen of a country that has been so great a beneficiary of Colonel Stimson's anti-isolationist policies—heartily approving of the interventionist program. However, the facility with which he fudges the nature of that program is dismaying, and finally offensive. Hodgson explains that, "Of all the men who helped to steer the United States from the real isolation of 1867 or even 1911, through the unsustained commitment of 1917-19 and the delusion of isolationism, to the firm commitment to support the ideology of democracy by global political and military involvement, Colonel Stimson was one of the half-dozen most important and perhaps the most representative." This is emphatically *not* the same thing with which he credits Stimson in the 30's, when "he had stood up to the tempting appeals of the isolationists and insisted that the United States could never avoid the world's quarrels." Yet Hodgson seems either to confuse the two policies or else to assume that the first one is necessarily derivative of the second.

Mr. Hodgson's line on Colonel Stimson is that he was the link between the New Nationalism of Theodore Roosevelt, compounded with the New Internationalism of Woodrow Wilson, and the "liberal internationalism" of the American foreign policy "Establishment" between 1945 and 1965 whose fundamental assumptions were Henry Stimson's legacy to his country. Stimson in his youth was a friend, in fact a protégé, of Roosevelt's; according to Hodgson he "fully shared the imperialists' world view and attitudes," having like them come to manhood in the period when the United States "was acquiring the strength to be a world power, without having acquired the intention to be one." Stimson's lifelong effort was to help his country to attain that status, though he was finally ambivalent enough about empire to be unwilling in the 40's to fight to save the British Empire, while striving to rescue from the holocaust Britain herself. He was essentially, Hodgson argues, a liberal imperialist of the kind represented in England by Joseph Chamberlain; from liberal imperialism developed the liberal internationalism of post-war America, whose proponents' aim, writes Hodgson admiringly, "was quite simply the moral and political leadership of the world." Stimson himself in his retirement wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that, "How soon this nation will fully understand the size and nature of its present mission, I dare not say. But I venture to assert that in very large degree the future of mankind depends on the answer to this question." In years to come, his former deputies and assistants refined the doctrines of "liberal internationalism" from positions of power within the Truman administration and subsequent ones; around 1965, so runs Hodgson's story, this consensual legacy was shattered by the Vietnam War and in the 1980's finally replaced by what Hodgson calls Ronald Reagan's "new conservatives," whom he believes had a lot more in common with the isolationist Republicans of the 20's and 30's than with the internationalist ones of the 50's and early 60's. (To this peculiar reading of recent American history, I shall return.) For as long as the American foreign policy establishment lasted, however, "Its history was [Henry Stimson's] history," in Hodgson's blunt formulation.

So be it. Now, however, I want to take up again Hodgson's throwaway remark concerning isolationism having been about American, not world, politics, and to juxtapose it with a phrase that appears on the immediately preceding page, "the enigma of isolationism." These two need to be considered together, because American politics and the "enigma" that strikes Godfrey Hodgson as unfathomable are really one and the same thing.

It is perhaps true that the case for American isolationism was for the most part not stated with great thoughtfulness, great learning, or profundity. But while "America First!" was a slogan, it was also—rather it ought to have been—a truism, at the heart of both American polity in particular and of the principle of national sovereignty in general. In order to express what he calls "the pure milk of 'liberal imperialism,'" Hodgson relies on Anchises' lines in the *Aeneid*:

> Roman, do not forget to rule
> the people in your sway;
> those will be your arts, to
> impose the habit of peace;
> to spare the subject, and beat
> down the proud.

That these sentiments are noble and high-minded cannot be denied, but that they necessarily justify the burdens of imperialism may be questioned by recalling the fate of the Roman Empire—or, for that matter, of the British. While the example of Rome has been a hackneyed one for many centuries, the truth is that the United States at the end of the 20th century, with its own imperial problems of race and ethnicity, "diversity," "multiculturalism," uncontrolled immigration, and the general weakening and fragmentation of its culture, of its morals, and of its belief, finds itself in circumstances alarmingly similar to those in which its precursor in the ancient world perished.

The United States of America has never been suited either to "liberal internationalism" or to imperialism for the obvious and simple reason that it was designed not for, but rather against, them. Probably the American zenith was reached at the Constitutional Convention of 1787; probably also the early decades of the Republic, when it was in terms of power and influence (though not of course in terms of culture) the equivalent of a modern Third World country, were its happiest and most prosperous, if not its most affluent; perhaps, finally, the Civil War, which caused the destruction of the federal system as it was originally intended and the unqualified victory of industrialism and nationalism, leading in turn to imperialism and internationalism, marked the beginning of the end of the Founders' handiwork and of the society that had made them possible. It is arguable that these developments together with the price they entailed—the damage done to the fabric of American society and to the structure and

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polity of American government—were historically "inevitable." Yet man does not live by concepts of inevitability, and American isolationists in the interwar period especially ought not to be faulted for their fears and reservations based, perhaps, for the most part on a perception of historical forces they recognized only dimly. Certainly they do not deserve the obloquy heaped on them by Colonel Stimson when he wrote after the attack on Pearl Harbor that "This country united has practically nothing to fear, while the apathy and divisions stirred up by unpatriotic men have been hitherto very discouraging." These same "unpatriotic men," as with the clarity of hindsight we can see today, had better historical foresight than he. Theoretical isolationism may be as dangerous (almost) as compulsive interventionism, but strategic isolationism is prudent statecraft; intervention in the interest of national security is one thing, intervention on behalf of national "ideals" another. And if the Borahs and Smoots and Rankins were indeed wrong, as probably they were, about World War II, their anti-interventionist heirs were probably right about Korea, Vietnam, Panama, and Kuwait.

On the penultimate page of the text of *The Colonel*, Godfrey Hodgson takes out after what he calls "the new conservatives," the "right-wing operatives who trooped into Washington to advise Ronald Reagan in 1980." These people, Hodgson claims, were essentially the heirs of the isolationists whom Stimson

> fought so vigorously in public and despised so heartily in private. They did not oppose foreign intervention; they approved of it, so long as it was short, cheap and effective. But they did not share Stimson's picture of a world kept peaceful by collective security, guaranteed by American power but striving for international alliances. Their aspiration was not so much to the leadership of the world, moral or otherwise, as to the building of a system that would protect America from the contamination of foreign entanglements and the persistent perversity and troublesome ingratitude of foreigners. . . . Above all, their instinct was not for the center but for the extreme.

And he quotes the "first hero" of these "new conservatives," Barry Goldwater: "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice, moderation in the defense of liberty is no virtue"!

In the words of Colonel Stimson, on the occasion of a Texas attorney telling him that he hoped he had spent the night before in sin, as the Texan himself had done: "What is this man talking about?" Where did Mr. Hodgson spend the 1980's? (In England, apparently.) Who are these "new conservatives" whose first hero was Barry Goldwater? Surely not Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ken Adelman, Richard Perle, Elliott Abrams, and their numerous supporters in the media and in the foundations who, early on in the Reagan years, captured the administration's foreign policy and put it in global service to the "ideology of democracy" that Henry Stimson helped to develop and that Godfrey Hodgson extols. ◁

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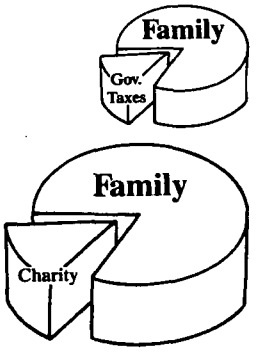

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The Democratic Crusade

by Paul Gottfried

The Hollow Men: Politics and Corruption in Higher Education
by Charles J. Sykes
Washington: Regnery Gateway; 356 pp., $19.95

◆

In *The Hollow Men* Charles J. Sykes resumes the brief against American higher education that he began in his widely publicized *Profscam*, published in 1988. Sykes argues in both books that our best universities, most conspicuously in their humanities faculties, have betrayed their true educational mission: instead of challenging students to think, professors parrot prescribed slogans about minorities and try to impose their views on the rest of society. Sykes illustrates the extremes to which politically correct speech and gestures have been carried on American campuses, and he examines the coded languages about "diversity" through which the thought processes of control operate.

The Hollow Men focuses on President James O. Freedman of Dartmouth College to show how this unprincipled administration has capitulated to the self-appointed "spokespersons" for designated "minority victims." Sykes makes much of the opportunistic groveling and righteous posturing of the Dartmouth administration, but he could easily have multiplied his cases by citing the equally cowardly and arrogant behavior of other university presidents past and present, like Kingman Brewster of Yale, who fell opportunely in love with the Black Panthers. What is particularly striking about Sykes' eloquent indictment is the unexceptional nature of his story. What Sykes describes is unimpeachably true and inexpressibly odious, but also unremarkable: reading him is like being told that concentration camp guards bullied their starving victims. To which the response must be, that disgusting people behave disgustingly.

More interesting is trying to figure how the sociopaths described in *The Hollow Men* advance in our universities. The people whom Sykes depicts often express violent hatred toward a world that they imagine represses homosexuals, lesbians, and blacks; yet Sykes never explains how American society could bestow on such human beings the supremely important task of transmitting culture to its young. Part of the answer may be the cynicism of those who perceive growing cultural and political similarities between universities and other sections of American society. When I asked why my neighbors were sending their son to Yale in view of its policy of recruiting homosexuals, they looked at me in surprise before explaining: "It's no worse than Montgomery County, Maryland!" To which my own involuntary response was: "Yale still isn't that bad!"

Despite his compelling account of the attack on the humanities and Western civilization course at Dartmouth and the "startling triumph of unreason" in America's elite universities, there are two weaknesses in Sykes' analysis that should in all fairness be mentioned. The first is the tendency to raise up Martin Luther King as the idealized opposite of whatever Sykes is castigating. In contrast to America's culturally illiterate youth, East German students are shown in Christian churches reading "the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., who in turn had drawn his own inspiration from the philosophical tradition he traced from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau, John Stuart Mill and Locke, as well as the eloquent poetry of the Old Testament." The point of this quotation is not to demonstrate that Sykes provides an inaccurate picture of Martin Luther King. Nor is it to scold him for misrepresenting an indifferently educated plagiarist, whose speeches were full of pop liberation theology and demands for reparations to blacks and other minorities.

Although Sykes claims to be defending the Western Great Books, the witnesses he calls in their defense are King and those who might make it into the first edition of the neocon *Who's Who*. The editor of *Milwaukee Magazine*, Sykes seems most comfortable when quoting other journalists and political celebrities, particularly those who share his own Cold War liberal sympathies; his strengths and weaknesses both reflect his own background. He writes gracefully, but exhibits little understanding of those forces that his own heroes, Robert Hutchins and Mark Van Doren, were instrumental in supplanting; he treats scornfully "the rigid hegemony" of classical studies at Columbia University, which President Nicholas Murray Butler worked against in doing his part for America's Crusade for Democracy. The Columbia curriculum got overhauled in 1917 when it was given a "War Issues" focus, and the humanities curriculum that emerged from the war went on to stress "peace issues," being "personified in the figure of Mark Van Doren who combined brilliant scholarship with inspired teaching." Sykes is quick to point out that though Van Doren worked to instill democratic values, he assigned in his classes the "criticism of liberal capitalism" produced by Marx and Lenin.

He fails to note, however, that Van Doren was a notorious apologist for Stalin, and fairly attacked by Sidney Hook (whom Sykes venerates) for that reason. More importantly, Sykes seems not to realize that the humanities curricula—which he identifies with everything noble and civilized—was from the beginning a political football. It placed emphasis on teaching values, not on a close study of classical texts; and it placed at the heart of the curriculum the kind of civics lessons that inspired advocates of "Democratic Civilization" (Van Doren's perennial course) are the most eager to provide. Because of his narrowly partisan interest, Sykes repeats the standard but often contradictory defenses for the humanities curriculum now under as-

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sault from the radical left. The "essence" of that curriculum can be traced to the Great Books program, which was organized at Columbia and Chicago earlier in the century and which furnishes access to an "ongoing, often raucous and contentious debate." This debate, which is supposed to emerge from reading thinkers who (Sykes never tells us) were, in most cases, unmistakably nondemocratic, allows students nevertheless to grasp the roots of "the democratic philosophy of the West." Democratic indoctrination, ongoing debate, and the study of past thinkers, most of whom held no brief for modern democracy, are supposed to produce an appreciation for our democratic way of life. The means of doing this is to make sure that the right sorts of people teach the curriculum, lest the resulting discussion leave open questions that true democrats should wish to close. If politics and corruption have indeed beset higher education, as Sykes demonstrates, perhaps we can discover their causes only by looking further back in time.

Paul Gottfried is a professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania.

Visible Saints

by M.E. Bradford

The Men I Have Chosen for Fathers: Literary and Philosophical Passages
by Marion Montgomery
Columbia: University of Missouri Press;
264 pp., $24.95

◆

There is no other American man of letters quite like Marion Montgomery. With the addition of each new book to the canon of works published by the Sage of Crawford, his achievement becomes the more astonishing; the range and depth of his thought, its variety and scope the more impressive. For Professor Montgomery has written educational theory, poetry, drama, criticism, fiction, systematic philosophy, literary history, and theology. Which is to say nothing of his special gift for cultural analysis. Moreover, he has done all of this at a pace that is constantly accelerating. Nor is there any suggestion of abatement. Montgomery's synthetic powers are exceptional. Whatever the subject, his results are original and unexpected. Therefore it is a significant event when he comes forward to acknowledge those models and influences that have directly impacted upon his mind.

The Men I Have Chosen for Fathers fits inside a recognizable genre, with the word "chosen" in its title seriously meant. There is an explanation for Marion Montgomery. And these "men" (including Flannery O'Connor) are part of it. This list of fathers leans toward the reflective. No modern writer has had a more comprehensive encounter with the grand tradition of British and American literature than Professor Montgomery. Furthermore, his literary education reaches beyond those confines of language to include Vergil, Dante, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. But the principle of selection operative in assembling this book is not primarily aesthetic in origin. To the contrary, this time the common denominator bringing under one cover essays on Richard Weaver, Eric Voegelin, Cleanth Brooks, Ezra Pound, Robert Frost, Flannery O'Connor, and Solzhenitsyn is truth spiritual and religious—both the absence of such insight as a kind of negative evidence and its unquestioned centrality in the work of those artists and thinkers Montgomery most admires.

In *The Men I Have Chosen for Fathers* Pound and Frost are negative examples and Voegelin a mixed figure—so determined not to violate the mystery of God that he refused to allow for revelation of his Deity as immanent in time; as incarnate, embodied, of a proportion and placement, subject to discussion. Voegelin describes himself as a pre-doctrinal, "pre-Nicean" Christian who cannot deposit his ineffable experience of "the Ground" in any dogma or religious structure, though he knows how it could be done.

According to Montgomery, we can trust as guides O'Connor, Weaver, and Solzhenitsyn—and Cleanth Brooks remains the mentor in strictly literary questions. Moreover, Thomas Stearns Eliot is never far from Montgomery's horizon.

The art of his near-contemporary and fellow Georgian, Flannery O'Connor, has been a persistent subject for Montgomery. No one else has written more (or better) commentary on her fiction. Once more his subject is the reality of evil in Miss O'Connor's stories and the sacramental view of creation that modifies her Augustinian rigor. He also praises her reviews for the *Georgia Bulletin*—conversations with members of a Roman Catholic community to which she belonged.

It is this same civilized availability and discursiveness that he admires in Professor Brooks' *William Faulkner: First Encounters* (1983). For Marion Montgomery, it is criticism as social encounter concerned with the "ancient relation of life and art" that recommends this introduction to Faulkner studies—an "understanding Faulkner" to go with Brooks' other guides to the inexperienced reader in the art of construing texts on their own terms, with reference to the language and the mythos of the world to which they belong. Brooks is critic as expositor, who presents the student with literature as a mode of knowledge in the concrete. He is a rhetor, like Professor Montgomery's other Southern preceptor, Richard M. Weaver of North Carolina.

Weaver's *The Southern Tradition at Bay* is Montgomery's focus among his works. It is, according to the original subtitle, a "study in the survival of a mind and a culture." Montgomery salutes Weaver's book as achieving its purpose: for encouraging the phenomena that it also explains. Weaver, says Montgomery, earned a place "in our pilgrim company" where he "bears himself with the resoluteness of a prophet," showing us always the significance of our contingent status. Moreover, as rhetor, Weaver is obliged to persuade us of the truth given to him, just as the critic must teach us to read on our own.

The poet, in contrast to the rhetorician, must attempt both more and less. He must show an action, rendering "a movement of the soul in words" that is as far from provincial as it is from rootless abstraction.

What is of value in Solzhenitsyn has, in this book, its counterpoint in the qualities Montgomery believes to be

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missing from the work of Robert Frost and Ezra Pound. The three writers are played off of one another in an instructive fashion. Frost is for Montgomery the great equivocator; and Pound a strange variety of liberal utopian—at least until he discovered that knowledge was not enough, that the Renaissance was flawed at its core, had invested too much of human hope in the image of a salutary city. Montgomery's overviews of these two poets are persuasive. Moreover, for some of us they help to clear away difficulties. Frost as public man often affected more than guarded epiphanies, even recommending something close to Christian orthodoxy to his friends. But for Montgomery, Frost is usually a poet like Edgar Allan Poe—the "modern autonomous and alienated man." Frost fights shy of asking too much of his metaphors and of reaching toward those meanings that the heart desires to find. Montgomery believes he is too Socratic. His reservations recall the early comment of Yvor Winters on Frost as "spiritual drifter." They do not account for everything Frost wrote, but do point to a difficulty with his characteristic strategy. Concerning Montgomery's assessment of Ezra Pound, even a small caveat is inappropriate. For Pound was always an American who had no home-place in his country—a defender of the great traditions of the West who could not participate in most of them. Like most moderns, he invested too much of himself in an imaginary future.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is the absolute antitype of Pound. The Russian novelist, following the established Orthodox tradition, condemns the prideful effects of Renaissance and Enlightenment progressivism on the West, their glorification of man and his ability to solve his own problems. Furthermore, Solzhenitsyn, as in his 1978 speech at Harvard University, denigrates reason as a false idol and the worship of science as alchemy—an infernal magic, dangerous to the souls of those it touches. In experiencing Communism from Lenin to Stalin to Andropov, the Russians, Solzhenitsyn believes, have had a chance to reach the bottom and to see how empty is the modern spirit: that it is a measure of where related statist arrangements will tend, once they have run their course. In an extraordinary essay Montgomery compares Solzhenitsyn to the Nashville Agrarians who came together in *I'll Take My Stand*. The analogy is perceptive. For reasons that have to do with why Richard Weaver, Solzhenitsyn, and Donald Davidson all appear on his list of prophets, Montgomery reacts as he does to Cleanth Brooks, Ezra Pound, Robert Frost, and Eric Voegelin. For Montgomery is, in all of his openness, a fierce traditionalist and no part of the secular right, despite his deep suspicion of omnicompetent government. There is some evidence that, like Solzhenitsyn, he is more concerned with the harm that may be done by a secular American right than he is with Marxist ingenuity still functioning in the civilized world.

After warning against the attractions of mere repose, mere submission to what is providential, Marion Montgomery concludes his tribute to those who have educated him on a pious, accepting note, thankful for the givens in his life. The imagination of the artist feeds on providential things; but he reminds us that it is by choice that we defend or neglect particular positions, respecting what others have achieved by protecting their "self-ordering" and the "substance" it reveals: what will come of it once we have appropriated its excellence in what we do.

M.E. Bradford is a professor of English at the University of Dallas.

Beyond Victimology

by James P. Degnan

The Content of Our Character
by Shelby Steele
New York: St. Martin's;
175 pp., $15.95

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Shelby Steele's *The Content of Our Character*, a collection of essays, is mainly an attack on affirmative action, black separatism, and other such programs, policies, and trends that flourish in American universities and that Steele opposes, first of all, because he regards them as racist. By virtue solely of race, these programs reward blacks and other minorities and punish whites—for example, by awarding jobs and university admissions to blacks, while denying them to whites. Race, Steele believes, should never be "the source of power, privilege, status, or entitlement of any kind."

But Steele contends further that such programs are counterproductive. Generated by white guilt, by the desire of whites to redeem themselves from the imaginary guilt of participating in the long, sad history of the oppression of blacks by whites, these programs, he argues, derive from the notion that because blacks have suffered, because they are "victims," they are therefore "different," "special," and "unique" beings for whom "normal standards and values do not automatically apply." "With lower test scores and high school grade point averages than whites," blacks are admitted to universities and, once there, are accorded privileges that university administrators would never allow white students. "Administrators would never give white students a racial theme dorm where they could be 'more comfortable with people of their own kind,'" Steele writes; yet this is the sort of concession administrators routinely grant to demanding black students. And to what end? After twenty years of affirmative action programs and black separatist policies, of "Black studies departments, black counseling programs, Afro-houses, black theme dorms, black homecoming dances, black graduations, and ethnic food in the cafeterias," blacks in American universities are worse off than before the programs and policies began. "Black students have the highest dropout rate (70 percent nationally) and the lowest grade point average of any group in American universities," according to Steele. And despite extraordinary efforts to recruit black students into the universities, black enrollment has dropped considerably since the mid-1970's. "There are more young black men in prison than in college," Steele reminds the reader.

What is to be done? We might begin, Steele suggests, by repudiating the reverse racism of affirmative action and black separatism, not only because these are unfair to whites but because they are patronizing and demeaning to blacks: "Such policies have the effect of transforming whites from victimiz-

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ers into patrons and keeping blacks where they have always been—dependent on the largesse of whites." All parties, black and white, Steele suggests, must stop regarding blacks as *victims deserving of special treatment* and privileges, and begin instead to think of blacks as human beings—as American citizens whose constitutional rights guarantee them fair and equal treatment, nothing more, nothing less. White administrators (and faculty members) must stop trying to exorcise their "guilt" by caving in to ridiculous black demands for segregated facilities, for separate programs, and for special standards. White administrators (and faculty members) must realize that such behavior is all but killing blacks with phony kindness. Rather, these administrators and faculty members should spend their energies in demanding that black students achieve first-rate academic performance and in helping them to achieve it.

Black students, conversely, must stop "taking comfort" in being victims, must stop blaming others for their own failure and lack of initiative, must start taking responsibility for their own actions. Black students must stop acting in ways that confirm the racist stereotype that they hate learning, that they are lazy and intellectually inferior. Black students must seek to excel in academic performance by seeking aggressively to exploit the academic opportunities universities "all but shower on them." Rather than living as professional blacks, rather than being part of a black collective demanding special treatment and programs, black students must realize that their salvation lies in acting as self-interested individuals working toward becoming part of the mainstream in the university and in society. At the risk of being labeled "Toms" and "Oreos" by their black separatist peers, black students must have the courage to espouse middle-class values. Black students must realize that "Hard work, education, individual initiative, stable family life, property ownership—have always been the means by which ethnic groups have moved ahead in America." "Regardless of past or present victimization," Steele insists, "these 'laws' of advancement apply absolutely to black Americans also."

Considering that so many young blacks are educationally and economically "disadvantaged," how, without special help, can they be expected to attend, much less excel in, the universities? Steele's answer is that such programs are desirable if they are available not only to blacks but to all "disadvantaged" young Americans. Provide "better elementary and secondary schools, job training, safer neighborhoods, better financial assistance for college"—but don't provide such help for poor blacks on one side of town at the expense of poor whites on the other.

A Book-of-the-Month Club selection, *The Content of Our Character* has been called a remarkable book, "powerfully original," and it has recently won the National Book Critics Circle Award. Yet it hardly seems remarkable. Much of what it says has been said by white conservatives for years. What is remarkable is that Steele is not a white conservative. A professor of English at San Jose State in California, he is a black liberal, and as such he is able to bring to his material a point of view that converts the book's fairly conventional conservative thought into something exciting.

It is ironic, considering Steele's views on reverse discrimination, that were he not black his book wouldn't probably be in print, but to say so is not to diminish the quality or the importance of his book. If good writing is clear thinking made visible, good sense in print, then Shelby Steele is a very good writer indeed. And *The Content of Our Character*, though short on specific solutions to the problems he so ably articulates, is important not only for its attack on black separatism, but for its attack on the entire "politics of difference," of "diversity" and of "multiculturalism" that threatens to destroy the integrity of American universities. Arguing against all university programs and policies that "make of everyone on campus a member of a minority group," Steele establishes himself in the tradition of our sanest and most distinguished critics of American higher education, of such critics as Robert Maynard Hutchins and Jacques Barzun. In articulating his belief that universities must emphasize not "diversity" but "commonality," Steele sets himself as a new champion of an idea as old as the university itself: namely, that the university is, by nature, an intellectual community based on values its members, as human beings, hold in common; that it is a community of individuals and specialists capable of conversing with and understanding one another (and thereby of realizing themselves intellectually as individuals) only because they are united by a common stock of ideas, a common tradition, and a common language.

James P. Degnan writes from Aptos, California.

Reinventing the Wheel

by Robert A. Sirico

Religion, Wealth and Poverty
by James Vincent Schall
Vancouver: The Fraser Institute;
202 pp., $14.95

Capitalism or Socialism? An Economic Critique for Christians
by Enrique M. Urena
Translated by Robert Barr
Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press;
256 pp.; $14.95

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Two Jesuits have recently written books on social ethics, the humane economy, and on liberating the poor. I know what you're thinking: two more liberation theologians using Marxist criteria for their analysis, and ruthlessly criticizing the free market. Think again.

Prevalent opinion traditionally associates the Society of Jesus with all forms of cabals, while a current version of this conspiracy theory identifies Jesuits with socialism and its religious expression, liberation theology. Yet, if stereotypes can be shortcuts to knowledge, they might just as easily be detours around it, and the appearance of these books by Jesuit Fathers James Schall and Enrique Urena (a Spaniard), both of which make a moral case for a free market, prove this fact. These works are made all the more relevant by the centenary of *Rerum Novarum* on May 15, the first of the papal social encyclicals, which will no doubt excite much de-

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bate about the connection between economics and morality.

Father Schall's collection of previously published essays is significant for two reasons. First, Father Schall, a political scientist at Georgetown University, defends the free market by retrieving from the Catholic tradition a respect for the rights to property and enterprise (a tradition superbly traced in Alejandro Chafuen's enormously important little book *Christians for Freedom: Late-Scholastic Economics*, 1986). Second, this series of theologically astute pieces is published under the aegis of the Fraser Institute, a Canadian libertarian think-tank, which indicates the importance that libertarians are beginning to place on moral and even religious arguments in making the case for a free society.

One of the many enlightening sections of Father Schall's collection is Chapter 16, "Both God and Money." Here, Father Schall uses the occasion of a visit to a Carmelite chapel to bridge the gap between the spiritual and material worlds. He acknowledges that money may enable "us to do many more immoral things than we might were we poorer," but he also probes more deeply to observe that the "refusal to make money, even if disguised as religious virtue, can be an injustice to others."

A *leitmotiv* winding its way through these essays is the production of wealth as both a moral and a spiritual endeavor. In constructing this theme, Father Schall displays an enviable talent for condensing much wisdom into short sentences, such as, "The 'right to be fed' can be turned into a formula to blame those who know how to produce food for the condition of those who do not."

Point those who would conclude from the above that Father Schall is nothing but a papal lackey to his commentary on John Paul II's encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. Here Father Schall engages the Pope's arguments seriously and displays what critical yet loyal dialogue with the magisterium on moral issues ought to look like, as when he laments, "The word 'consumer' is a perfectly good one, and it is a pity to see it used as some sort of substitute for greed."

In private, Michael Novak once likened Father Schall to his Jesuit-brother John Courtney Murray. This caused me to think of Father Enrique Urena as our side's Juan Luis Segundo; with three separate doctorates, one each in economics, theology, and philosophy, Father Urena brings to his study a number of disciplines.

Interestingly, Father Urena's book was translated at the behest of Orbis Books, the publishing house of the Maryknoll community, and as such the major printing arm of liberation theology in the United States. Orbis did not initially know what they had on their hands. When it became clear that Father Urena opted for the free market instead of for socialism, they decided its content did not accord with their publishing guidelines; it was at that point that the book was recommended, by a third party, to its present publishers. The events in Eastern Europe, they said, "seem to be a confirmation of the author's thesis."

Orbis's confusion is understandable. Father Urena reminds me in some ways of Father Avery Dulles, S.J. Both are writers who are so scrupulously objective in stating the various sides to an argument that it is necessary to read them carefully to see where they themselves stand on an issue. After pages of probing with an "on the one hand, and on the other hand" type of analysis, Father Urena concludes that the free market is practically and morally the superior way of organizing society.

But Father Urena's unique contribution to the discussion of Catholic social ethics does not lie in this conclusion; others have, after all, made the same case in different ways. Rather, Father Urena's ability to write without a hint of partisanship is what is most valuable. Father Urena simply asks, in essence: which form of social organization will best demonstrate, from a historical and economic perspective, a "humanizing superiority"? It is not his intention to examine the theoretical basis for the relationship between Marxism and Christianity; he seeks, instead, to engage "the practical vector of the problem," and this leads his study more specifically into economics. No specifically *economic* treatment of this question on the part of liberation theologians readily comes to mind. Father Urena has taken as a point of departure an area that is as critical as it is absent in contemporary discussions of social ethics, from the corpus of liberation theology, to magisterial pronouncements, to the pastoral letter of the American bishops.

Father Urena puts it this way: "A respectable option for socialism (or for capitalism) on the part of the Christian *cannot be made directly from the demands of the Gospel, not from theology: it must be preceded by a strictly economic, political, and sociological analysis of the problem.*" The theoretical impact of Father Urena's empirical investigation is, however, to "destroy the myth that Marxist economic socialism is *theoretically* closer to the Gospel than any possible form of market economy."

A body of Catholic writers is beginning to lay the groundwork for a contemporary moral perspective on liberty and on the institutions designed to preserve and enhance it. As contemporary contributions to the development of Catholic social thinking, both Father Schall's and Father Urena's books are essential. History isn't ending; rather it may be just beginning.

Paulist Father Robert A. Sirico is president of the newly formed Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty and currently works at the Catholic Information Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A Distant Encounter

by Gregory McNamee

Yankees in the Land of the Gods
by Peter Booth Wiley, with Korogi Ichiro
New York: Viking; 578 pp.; $24.95

◆

In the spring of 1847, Ranald McDonald, half Chinook Indian and half Scots, jumped ship from the Yankee whaler *Plymouth* and steered his stolen dory toward Rishiri, a small island in the Japanese archipelago. Having heard tales of Nippon for years—a land of cannibals, American sailors whispered; no place to be shipwrecked—the curious McDonald, who had roamed over much of the world, thought to have a look at the

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place for himself.

He saw Japan from the inside, all right: the inside of an imperial jailhouse, where for seven months he was insistently but gently interrogated by officers of the Tokugawa shogunate, the dynasty that had ruled Japan since 1600 and that would endure but a generation more. Satisfied that he was not a spy, the shogun's agents in time released McDonald, returning him to a passing English freighter along with an assortment of shipwrecked European sailors, all of them bodily intact. McDonald made his way back to the port of New York, where he recounted his adventures to those few who would listen, among them a young naval officer named Matthew Calbraith Perry.

The Japanese had reason to suspect McDonald's intentions. Three centuries earlier the ruling clans had offered their hospitality to passing Portuguese crews; in return they received the gifts of smallpox, firearms, and Christianity, all of which took decades to suppress. Other Europeans followed the Portuguese, especially the Dutch and the British, who seemed bent on stripping the island of its treasures. Soon the Japanese, tired of *gaijin* intrigues, slammed the gates shut, and the foreigners turned their attention elsewhere. By the time of McDonald's impromptu visit, the principal European powers had carved up neighboring China, installed feuding warlords, and converted the Middle Kingdom's economy to serve the opium trade.

The Tokugawa shogunate reasoned, and with cause, that they would fare no better than the Chinese were they to fall under foreign influence. Tell your people, the shogun instructed McDonald, to stay away. But, as Peter Wiley writes in *Yankees in the Land of the Gods*, their warning did no good, flying as it did in the face of Manifest Destiny and America's expansion into a tricoastal power, one that would soon spread over the globe.

The United States had been an economic force in the Atlantic for half a century. The newly won lands of the Southwest and California gave it a window on the Pacific at just about the time McDonald returned to New York. Three rival American steamship companies, all of whose directors Matthew Perry advised, established Manhattan-to-San Francisco routes by way of Cape Horn, and soon all Asia lay within their reach. But Japan's refusal to welcome the newcomers rankled; one American official wrote, "I am sure that the Japanese policy of seclusion is not according to God's plan of bringing the nations of the earth to a knowledge of His truth," thus granting efforts to penetrate the silk curtain the legitimacy of a new crusade.

Matthew Perry, newly promoted to the rank of commodore, was primed for the adventure. On the seventh of July 1853, he led an American squadron of four warships carrying 61 cannon and almost a thousand men into Tokyo Bay, trained his guns on the Japanese harbor fortresses, and demanded anchorage. Asked the purpose of his mission, Perry replied that his crew was undertaking a survey of the Japanese islands. When told that such an incursion was forbidden under Japanese mandate, Perry sniffed that it was perfectly legal under American law.

The relatively simple chain of events leading up to Perry's first encounter with the Tokugawa occupy slightly more than half of Peter Wiley's study, for, borrowing a page from Simon Schama and other recent adherents to *annaliste* methods of history, Wiley loads his narrative with all manner of suggestive detail. His text is full of arcana on maritime discovery, shipping routes from Hong Kong to points east, Japanese court conventions, international struggles for fishing rights, and the like; these oddments are uniformly interesting, for Wiley, a practiced journalist, knows how to tell a good story well. Still, they are not strictly necessary, and they sometimes burden an already long text.

Wiley's story becomes more compelling, and *Yankees in the Land of the Gods* picks up speed, with the aftermath of Perry's opening of Japan to foreign commerce. Free trade, Wiley notes, did not bring the dreaded opium market to Japan.

Instead, it exposed a comparatively tranquil nation—at least one content to stay at home—to the wide world. With the development of first-class seaports and new modes of manufacture, the latter requiring raw materials that the islands did not possess, Japan became host to all manner of foreign cultures (lending it its modern, voracious appetite for all things exotic) and an acquisitive seagoing power in its own right. Although Wiley doesn't outright say so, without Perry's arrival one suspects that there might have been no Pearl Harbor.

Instead—and here Peter Wiley's analysis, supported by material from Japanese scholar Korogi Ichiro, becomes most powerful—two nations were thrust into the mistrustful proximity that marks their relationship to this day. Fearful of any foreign influence and ideologically assured of their own ethnic and cultural superiority, the Japanese quickly learned the tricks of all the modern world's trades and became more adept at them than were their teachers; the Americans unloaded goods that had scarcely any worth at home and developed an attachment to the cheap labor and commodities of the far-off archipelago. The story is one that we're reminded of every day in an America full of Honda Accords and Mitsubishi VCRs. The great accomplishment of Peter Wiley's fine book is to trace that tale to its origins in the minds of such ambitious men as Matthew Perry and Ranald McDonald, who transformed the world without ever knowing it.

Gregory McNamee is a freelance author, critic, and poet in Tucson, Arizona.

LIBERAL ARTS

WHY STATISTICAL TRAINING SHOULD BE MANDATORY FOR BRITISH JOURNALISTS

Alexander Cockburn, in the January 25, 1991, *San Francisco Examiner*, wrote: "All the crowing about inadequate Iraqi anti-aircraft fire and 'unusually light' losses of allied planes conceals the fact that losses per combat mission have been around the Vietnam and Korean level of four in every 1,000 missions, which sounds good until you do the math from the pilot's point of view and realize that after a hundred missions you have a one in three chance of being shot down."

The actual probability is $1-(^{996}/_{1000})^{100}$ or roughly 1 in 20.

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Ancient Texts and Modern Readers

by E. Christian Kopff

The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism
by Kurt and Barbara Aland
Translated by Errol F. Rhodes
Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged
Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; 368 pp., $32.50

◆

"Begin at the beginning," was the King's suggestion to Alice. "Go on to the end. Then stop." Kurt and Barbara Aland of the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster, Westphalia, Germany, begin their book on the New Testament with Erasmus' *editio princeps* of 1516, the first printed edition. They then survey the printed editions since, attaining such detail and intricacy that by page 43 even they have misgivings.

"Much of the above discussion has been rather complicated—perhaps too complicated for the beginning reader of this book—because many of the things mentioned and many of the terms used are new and unfamiliar . . . . The reader should not be unduly concerned for the moment with the details and the difficulties—at least a first impression and a general appreciation have been gained. Later, after completing this book and gaining familiarity with the Greek New Testament, the reader may return to these pages and reread them."

Those familiar with the preface to the first edition may remember that the Alands told them, "The purpose of this book is to introduce readers (including beginners with no previous experience) step by step to the difficulties of the material, if they will read it straight through from the beginning." Intelligent beginners will proceed to get a copy of Bruce Manning Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* (Second Edition, Oxford, 1968), which begins with the ancient book, then discusses ancient copies and other ancient evidence for the New Testament, and only then presents a summary of the history of the New Testament as a printed text, followed by examples of specific textual difficulties.

The beginner with no previous experience will be befuddled by an introduction that proceeds *in medias res*, but will probably leave his half-read copy of the Alands' book with the vague notion that textual criticism is too complicated a matter for ordinary mortals—especially hardworking ministers of the Gospel—and that work on the text of the New Testament has been done by brilliant, hardworking, if erring giants whose productions are safely in the hands of less brilliant but much more methodical and careful scholars (mainly at the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster).

Despite its failure as an introduction to New Testament studies, *The Text of the New Testament* is an important book: it records openly and with disarming frankness one of the most important events in recent scholarly and cultural history. Throughout the late 19th century and most of this century as well, there were available many different texts of the original Greek of the New Testament, texts that differed in thousands of readings. This is not so

BRIEF MENTIONS

AIN'T YOU GOT A RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE: THE PEOPLE OF JOHNS ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA—THEIR FACES, THEIR WORDS, AND THEIR SONGS
Recorded and edited by Guy and Candie Carawan, revised and expanded edition
Athens, GA: Brown Thrasher Books/University of Georgia Press; 240 pp., $29.95

Guy and Candie Carawan were active in the voting rights movement in the 1960's and centered their activities as folk singers and activists on Johns Island, a sea island not far from Charleston, South Carolina. They are among the kindest and most selfless people I have ever run into, and I have always felt there is something wrong with our country that so many good people in search of virtue turned to the far left.

I well remember the first edition of this book, with banjo player Bob Yellin and texts of songs and tales collected by the Carawans. Indeed, I was around for some of the time that Mr. Yellin was taking these pictures, and I have always carried with me in my mind his photo of an old man throwing a net with the grace of an acrobat. There is no part of the United States where black people developed or preserved a richer and more authentic cultural life. This second edition is welcome, if only as an illustration of how progress affects communities. On the positive side are the increased facilities for health care, and it is certainly true that a great deal more money is available for a variety of projects, but the note struck most often in the recent texts is elegiac: "It's harder now to get the young people to come on the old side," and "Everything is changed now. The world is so tough today." What had bound together so many of these people had been a vigorous religious life that culminated in the all-night Christmas watch, but not, as Mrs. Alice Wine observes:

> These people is too funny. I can't figure out how people could change so fast. Everybody go down to the church. They have watch meetings there, but they don't go but half the night . . . It's too dangerous now to walk to the hall at night. . . . It's not the cars only, people do wicked. People will kill you and knock you down and do all kind of things with you. . . . The people don't have no old songs now, the people have new songs. And I don't know one of them. When they start to sing, I just shut my mouth. Nothing but new songs now. Ain't got a taste to it. Ain't got a spirit in it.

This is still a wonderful book that conveys some of the joy and solemnity of the old sea island life. That way of life is now giving way to the well-intentioned arts of progress, but as long as their faith endures, they will still be a people. As their song has it:

> You go brute me, you go scorn me,
> You go scandalize my name.
> Since my soul got a seat up in the Kingdom,
> That's all right.

—Thomas Fleming

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awesome a statement as it might seem. Most of the variants, as the differing readings are known, were quite minor and unimportant. Some of the variation was due to differences in scholarly methods or in competence, some to denominational diversity, some to the war between religious liberals and religious conservatives. In the course of the past generation, however, a coup took place. There are now two standard and easily available texts of the Greek New Testament, one of them aimed at scholars, the other at translators. The first gives some information on many passages, the second rather detailed information on many fewer passages. These texts are accepted by both the Protestant United Bible Societies and the corresponding offices of the Roman Catholic Church—"an inconceivable situation until quite recently," as the authors rightly say. These texts are almost exactly similar, word for word, letter for letter. The key figures in creating this nearly unheard of agreement have been the Alands.

Some may object that although the scholarly edition, Nestle-Aland, is Kurt Aland's, the translators' edition—the Greek New Testament, or GNT—is edited by an international board of scholars who vote on every issue and among whom, in practice, there is almost no dissent. When Bruce Metzger compiled a volume of textual notes on the GNT using the minutes of the board's meetings, there were only 30 dissensions from the hundreds of decisions recorded in the volume. Twenty-seven of these were by Metzger himself, eight of them shared with another scholar who had two additional dissensions. Metzger shared one dissension each with two other scholars and Kurt Aland wrote one by himself in addition to another he shared with Metzger. The board's decisions were typically made on the narrowest of grounds, and many important passages are not even discussed.

This consensus might seem to be an encouraging sign: after nearly five hundred years of research, the science of textual criticism has finally, it appears, given us a New Testament text on which we can all agree. I am doubtful, however. Where scholars have access to an author's own copy or proofs corrected by the author, substantial consent may be expected, although not always achieved. The evidence for the New Testament is, at closest, generations from the original copies, and for many passages, hundreds of years from them. On the other hand, we have a great deal of relevant evidence. There are many issues on which scholars can and do disagree, yet this valid disagreement is not reflected in the commentary based on the notes of their meetings. Furthermore, important decisions are made on the basis of a scholarly consensus that is not textual, but theological.

Let me give two examples of very different types. The first involves the nature of the kinds of texts that have preserved the New Testament. In the early centuries of the Christian era there were a number of distinctive texts, one partially identified with Italy and Latin translations, some with other connections. Eventually a vulgate was created, which is found in most later manuscripts and was the basis of the Erasmus text and the King James Bible. Much of the early history of modern Bible scholarship involved freeing the text of the New Testament of inferior readings from the late and poor manuscripts that Erasmus used for his edition. The tradition represented by the King James Bible, now called the Byzantine or Majority tradition, is, however, found in better manuscripts than Erasmus used and contains a number of readings that have been discovered in early papyri and so cannot be due solely to a late edition. The common text of Nestle-Aland and GNT tends to give short shrift to this tradition, and the Alands make no bones about their contempt for competing older editions that paid more attention to Majority readings, not to mention the recent Farstad-Hodges *Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* ("an anachronism in every respect"). One does not have to believe that the Majority text is always right to know that it has been proven to contain good, old readings, as the important classicist Günther Zunzt pointed out. The Aland-inspired consensus on this issue is old-fashioned and needs to be rethought.

Let us leave general considerations and take a specific passage: Paul's Letter to the Romans 9:4-5. There are no significant variant readings here, but punctuation can change the text profoundly. Paul is lamenting the alienation of his brothers according to the flesh from Jesus. "They are Israelites. The sonship and the glory and the commandments and the giving of the law and service in the temple and God's promises belong to them. The Fathers belong to them and from them according to the flesh comes the Messiah." And now, depending on the punctuation, one may read: a) "May God who is over all be blessed forever!" or b) "the Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever." The committee opted for the former and so the joint text is punctuated. Their reasoning was straightforward. Nineteenth-century New Testament scholars have proven that Paul did not believe that Jesus was God, therefore he could not have said that He was. In response, Metzger showed that when Paul or anybody else in the Bible in Greek or Hebrew says "Glory be to God!" or "God be blessed!"—what is technically called a doxology—such doxologies are always different in structure from Romans 9:5. Anyhow, it is extremely inappropriate to end a serious, even tragic, passage such as this one with a "Hallelujah!" The committee ignored the objective philological evidence in order to import into the text a theological view disguised as the result of historical-critical research.

I am not denying that the two editions with one text are fine works of scholarship. They are. Monopoly, however, is never beneficial, least of all in scholarship. In economics, monopoly at least makes some people rich. In scholarship, it impoverishes even those in control by denying them the active debate necessary to stimulate research. It gives the nonexpert a false idea of the state of the art. There are now many translations pouring out of various presses. They seem to indicate a great diversity and richness in our understanding of the Bible. In the case of the New Testament, this appearance is an illusion. Behind this superficial diversity lies a suffocating uniformity that does not represent the real, and very lively, possibilities of the text of the New Testament. Until the day that "Bible-believing" Christians care enough to master sufficient Greek to understand the key issues in translating the Bible—issues that are not beyond

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the grasp of the average intelligence — that richness will have little effect on Christianity in America.

E. Christian Kopff is the editor of a critical edition of Euripides' Bacchae.

A Private Sensibility

by R.S. Gwynn

Life Sentence: Selected Poems
by Nina Cassian
Edited by William Jay Smith
New York: W.W. Norton;
130 pp., $17.95

◆

A generous spread of four poems that appeared in the *New Yorker* early in 1990 introduced many American readers to the work of the renowned Romanian poet Nina Cassian (Renee Annie Stefănescu). Even though her poetry has been appearing in English versions for the better part of a decade, the *New Yorker* set, translated by such respected practitioners of the art as Richard Wilbur, Stanley Kunitz, Dana Gioia, and William Jay Smith, drew belated attention to a poet whose body of work ought to rank her among the foremost contemporary virtuosos of the short lyric.

Nevertheless, it may be difficult for American readers to appreciate Cassian fully, the dual fault of our recent literary fashions and the uneven abilities of her translators. She has apparently been too involved with getting on with her life (her bibliography lists 24 separate books of poetry, as well as children's books, puppet plays, fiction, and translations) to worry much about being stylishly neurotic. Her love lyrics, in particular, are so *healthy* in their emotional clarity that an audience raised on confessional breast-beating may find them old-fashioned. Her work is not political in any overt sense, though one might hasten to add that in a totalitarian society the cultivation of the private sensibility, expressed in lyrical poetry, may in fact be considered a subversive act. Cassian's personal history, as related by Smith in his excellent introduction to *Life Sentence*, is a fascinating tale in itself and one that, if not entirely happy in its outcome, at least manages to avoid the type of tragic ending that for years was all too common in the poet's unfortunate country.

Cassian was born in 1924, the child of non-practicing Jews who saw to it that she had piano lessons and could read and write before her sixth birthday. Her father was a translator of French and German and was the author of the Romanian version of Poe's "The Raven," which may provide a faint clue to the meaning of "The Burning of the Famous Castle Nevermore," one of Cassian's most cryptically surreal poems. At 18, Cassian married a young Jewish Communist poet. She was divorced, and then married again, this time to Al.I. Stefănescu, a critic and novelist who was her great love for 35 years and is the subject of many of her finest lyrics. Her early poems occasioned a typical Marxist literary controversy, for their resolute aestheticism fed ammunition to the regime's apologists. Smith relates the case: "In one poem she described Lenin sitting at his desk while the light filtering through the window turned his inkwell into a great blue light bulb. The poem caused a scandal; she was accused of wishing to write about the ink and the light bulb and of using Lenin merely as a pretext." Subsequently she wrote four books of politically correct poetry (which she now disavows), books for children, film criticism, and a number of musical compositions.

Following the death of her husband, Cassian accepted an invitation to visit the United States. While teaching a creative writing course at New York University in 1985, she learned that Gheorghe Ursu, an old acquaintance and confidant, had been arrested. In his office the police discovered a diary in which, apparently in all innocence, he had jotted down his friends' anti-government remarks and verses and identified the sources by name. Cassian's exile was apparently sealed in late 1987 when she learned that her library and personal effects, left behind in Bucharest, had been seized by the authorities. Smith's introduction was written early in 1989, almost a year before the revolt that toppled the Ceausescu regime, but Cassian has not yet ventured back to her homeland. Her recent project, translating *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into Romanian, will perhaps provide an occasion for her return.

Smith admits the difficulty of translating Cassian's poetry, which provides some challenges that free-verse translators are ill-equipped to meet. She often employs elaborate verse forms and a variety of meters, and a range of translators' strategies, some more fruitful than others, is evident here. Since the volume is not bilingual, one can only guess at what the originals' formal devices sound like to a native speaker. "Dream Girl," for example, appears to have originally been a poem in rhymed quatrains. Brenda Walker and Andrea Deletant translate it as free verse, with a hint of rhyme in the final stanza:

> And your familiar sleep
> splintered into seven fragments,
> and lips became transparent
> in a kiss.
>
> That's how we wandered
> through heaven,
> seven times seven . . .
>
> —Really?
> —No, just a dream. Just a dream.

On the facing page, Fleur Adcock renders the exquisitely fragile "Because You Don't Love Me" with its rhymed tercets more or less intact:

> I smile, and feel my feeble grin
> drip like a blood-streak down my
> chin
> because you don't love me.
>
> I dance, and my heavy hands
> just trail
> like a pair of anchors. I am pale
> because you don't love me.
>
> I light a cigarette, and choke
> in an Isadora-scarf of smoke
> because you don't love me.

Twenty different translators worked on this volume, alone or in collaboration, and Cassian herself contributed both advice and several of her own English versions. As one might expect, the overall results are mixed. Petre Solomon's attempt to rhyme results in this inept stanza:

> Some there are who, meeting
> me, have said:
> "Welcome to my life, you living
> wonder!"

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Other [*sic*] had nothing
whatever to say to me,
and I left them far behind,
wanting upward to wander.

On the other hand, Smith manages to turn consistently elegant passages:

I was given at birth this odd
triangular
face, the sugared cone that you
see now,
the figurehead jutting from
some pirate prow,
framed by trailing strands of
moonlike hair.

Disjointed shape I'm destined to
carry around
and thrust out steadily through
endless days,
wounding the retinas of those
who gaze
on the twisted shadow I cast
upon the ground.

Not surprisingly, Gioia, whose versions of Eugenio Montale's *Mottetti* appeared in 1990, and Wilbur, whose translations of French dramatic poetry are contemporary classics, provide the best moments in the volume. "Orchestra," as rendered by Gioia, stands as one of Cassian's most memorable lyrics. Its opening two stanzas introduce a conceit, an apt one if we recall Cassian's musical training, on which the emotion hinges:

Climbing the scales three
octaves at a time,
I search for you among the high
notes where
the tender flute resides. But
where are your
sweet eyelashes? Not there.

Then I descend among the
sunlit brasses—
their funnels glistening like
fountain tips.
I let them splash me with their
streaming gold,
but I can't find your lips.

Wilbur's version of "Ballad of the Jack of Diamonds" is animated by a witty lilt that Cassian has doubtless carried over from her children's books:

The two dark brothers of this
jack,
Abetted by the third, alack,
(Who, draped in hearts from
head to foot,
Is the most knavish of the lot),
Have vowed by all means to be
free
Of him who gives them
symmetry,
Making a balanced set of four
Whose equilibrium they abhor.

If everything in *Life Sentence* came up to this level it would be easy to acclaim Cassian as one of the greatest living poets. That so much of her poetry, "vibrating, sensitive, pulsating, / exploding in the orgasm of Romanian," is able to overcome the obstacles of English translation provides us with a clear indication of its worth.

R.S. Gwynn is the editor of the Dictionary of Literary Biography *volume* American Poets Since 1945, Second Selection. *He is a professor of English at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas.*

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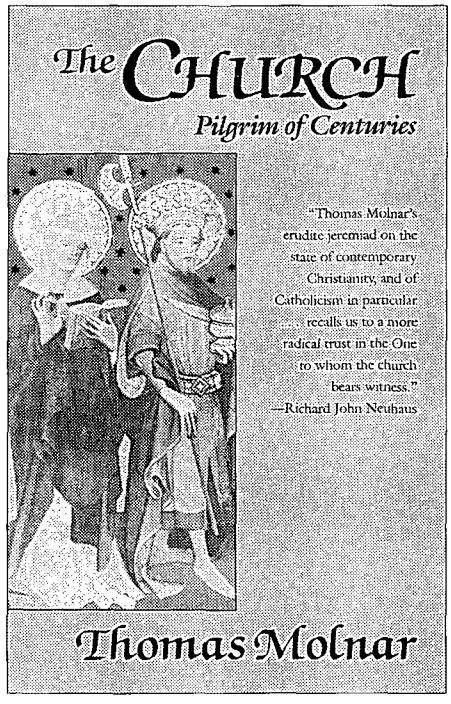
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Passion in Private

by Carl C. Curtis

A Bottle in the Smoke
by A.N. Wilson
New York: Viking; 320 pp., $18.95

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Over the last ten years, A.N. Wilson has been compared to the great 20th-century English satirists: Waugh, Amis, and Barbara Pym. Now that he is in the process of writing a trilogy, it was inevitable that some critic would add to these the name of Anthony Powell. Of course, publishers like to compare the work of older, established writers beside that of the young turks whose wares they hawk. As Scrooge might say of them, they are good businessmen.

Yet in this case the comparison is just. True, *A Dance to the Music of Time* is four times longer than Wilson's two-thirds-finished trilogy and its pacing is slower, partly because of its greater length and partly too because of Powell's more deliberate style. But, like Powell's, Wilson's purpose is to project images of an age in England now past but the effects of which are still with us. Similar, too, is Wilson's method of telling the story through the largely introspective camera's eye of a first-person narrator, a device that necessarily has its limits. We see only what Nick Jenkins or Wilson's Julian Ramsay sees, know only the people they know. Because such men are not earthshakers and hence do not walk among the great, our glimpse of their England is more private than public.

Experience demonstrates, however, that the private either invigorates or deadens the public. One can read both Powell and Wilson without fear of missing much of the age they chronicle. If the reader doubts whether this is possible, he need only ask himself if he would acquire a better understanding of England's march toward pragmatic, self-serving collectivism if he read a biography of Atlee or Bevan instead of *A Dance to the Music of Time*, with its portrayal of the climber Widmerpool.

With results similar to Powell's, Wilson has created Raphael Hunter, a self-appointed voice of British culture. Hunter first appears in the inaugural volume of the trilogy, *Incline Our Hearts*, while Julian Ramsay is at a school for boys, Seaforth Grange. Julian, orphaned in the middle of the war, lives between terms in the town of Templingham with his Aunt Deirdre and Uncle Roy, an Anglican priest. Typical of the age, his upbringing is not religious. Aunt Deirdre's two main interests are her garden and a radio soap called "The Mulberrys." Uncle Roy's passion in life is neither God nor his wife. He has spent his days memorizing every available bit of lore concerning an eccentric family of the local gentry, the Lampitts. Sargie Lampitt is Uncle Roy's dearest companion and favorite topic of conversation. Whether he would bother to help save a soul is an open question; it is certain that he would (and does) buttonhole a complete stranger in a railway station to talk to him about the Lampitts. Not that the family lacks fame: J. Petworth "Jimbo" Lampitt was a famous Edwardian belletrist, much in the mode of Pater. Other Lampitts, all leftist of one degree or another, have held government posts great and small. But the talents and accomplishments of a family that not one in a thousand could identify hardly seems worth the effort Uncle Roy invests in them. That he does anyhow is Wilson's way of highlighting the rather genial decadence of Roy's and Sargie's generation. Moreover, as the story progresses from Julian's teens in *Incline Our Hearts* to his early manhood in *A Bottle in the Smoke*, the Lampitts provide the ground for the alternating friendship and enmity of Julian Ramsay and Raphael Hunter.

Less genial and more decadent, Hunter unthinkingly and unfeelingly brings pain into the lives of Julian and those close to him. The first time the teenager Julian sees him is an embarrassing moment at Seaforth Grange. Coming around a corner he notices in a window the bare back of his art mistress and first love being stroked by Hunter, a man approximately in his late 20's. The incident might be no more, for Julian, than an insignificant and inevitable instance of adolescent heartbreak. But it proves to be typical of Hunter's way of life. He leaves the art mistress in the lurch for another whom, rumor says, he will marry. Years later, Julian discovers that Hunter never married her at all. Instead he took what he could from the liaisons with both women, and left without a twinge of conscience. In an almost identical manner, Hunter comes to Templingham to meet Sargie Lampitt. His stated purpose is to write a biography of Petworth Lampitt. Quickly, he enlists the aid of Julian's cousin, Felicity, gets her with child, and departs with the papers in his care, leaving her at the mercy of a back-street abortionist.

When, on a call to see Felicity, Uncle Roy and Aunt Deirdre press him about his family and education, he says he never went to either Oxford or Cambridge and changes the subject. He is completely and charmingly Machiavellian in his use of people, and, apparently in his own mind, innocent of all wrongdoing. Women adore him, not because he is a passionate lover (he isn't anything of the kind) but because they want to evoke from him the same kind of passion he makes them feel.

Hunter's willing victim in *A Bottle in the Smoke* is Julian's wife Anne. By a curious twist of fate, she is Sargie's niece, a fact Julian does not know when he meets and falls in love with her. By this time, Julian is an aspiring novelist and actor — he cannot make up his mind which — and a part-time bartender at a local pub, the Black Bottle. Hunter is now a regular acquaintance and a BBC television celebrity. His fame stems from the first volume of the Lampitt biography, but the second volume remains unwritten. This is partially due to Hunter's laziness, but also to the Lampitts, who found the book offensive and refuse to let him use the rest of "Jimbo's" papers. Having an affair with Anne is really a calculated ploy to secure the copyright. By the end of the book, he has succeeded — his reputation, as always, untarnished — and is in a better position than ever to tell the British public what it ought to admire in literature and art. That a marriage has been destroyed is no concern of his. Julian, meanwhile, is not a famous writer but a radio actor on, of all things, Aunt Deirdre's beloved "The Mulberrys."

There is no way a short review can do justice to this outstanding novel. For one thing, the trilogy still has one volume to go. What is more, the novel abounds with characters too eccentric to describe here, some of the most

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interesting of them at the Black Bottle: Day Muckley, the alcoholic failed novelist; Rikko and Fenella, Julian's landlord and landlady; Cyril, the proprietor of the pub, who looks like T.S. Eliot but has one of the filthiest mouths in London. The meaning of it all is the sum of the events and characters. Possibly the best way to depict Wilson's dark vision of the country, the people, and the age is through Uncle Roy's gloss of Psalms 119:83: "For I am become a bottle in the smoke." "It wouldn't have been a glass bottle," Roy says. "You've got to think of yourself as shrivelling up like an old leather pouch too near the fire."

Carl C. Curtis writes from Tyler, Texas.

De Gustibus Semper Disputandum Est

by J.O. Tate

The Encyclopedia of Bad Taste
by Jane and Michael Stern
New York: HarperCollins;
335 pp., $29.99

◆

I suppose this book might be called a coffee-table book. It has the shape and the lavish illustration of that kind of thing. And I suppose that of its kind, this book isn't so bad, which is not to say that it's good.

The Sterns' alphabetical survey of bad taste has the merit of some historical information. The background supplied for "Baton Twirling" was informative, for instance. So was the lowdown on "Breasts, Enormous," "Hot Pants," "Twinkies," "Roller Derby," and "Welk, Lawrence." But there is a sense in which *The Encyclopedia of Bad Taste* is, like the bad taste it catalogues, sick, sentimental, trivializing, life-denying, and phony. A book *about* pornography or violence can seem as nasty as a book *of* pornography or violence—a point not lost on those who market such books. This book about bad taste is not going to be of consuming interest to those with good taste; rather, it will instruct those of debased standards on how to lower the level. Your surgeon should bone up on anatomy? But Jack the Ripper will read the book, too.

In their introduction, the Sterns try to take the high road. They begin by quoting Clement Greenberg on kitsch, but soon relapse to wallowing in the sleaze they know so well.

> When things hang around this collective cultural Warehouse of the Damned long enough, they begin to shimmy with a kind of newfound energy and fascination. Their unvarnished awfulness starts looking fresh and fun and alluringly naughty. They grow beyond mere tastelessness and enter the pantheon of classic bad taste. . . . And isn't that just grand! We hate to think how drab things would be without bad taste. It is a powerful seasoning; sometimes it is so spicy it makes you gag. But consider the alternative: a world without Roller Derby cross-body dunks, Las Vegas lounge acts, blubbering globules of Tammy Faye Bakker's mascara, and the grandeur of Dolly Parton's breasts. Life would be just too damn polite.

Maybe so; but I am not too polite to say that this meretricious volume is as vulgar as its subject, though less honest. The authors seem to have been confused by their obsession with slime, and so their book is flawed by the corrupting effect of their subject. The cornball and the cutesy-poo have a way of dominating their own exposure.

Though the Sterns go on about "history," their book has little sense of moral, not to mention aesthetic, perspective. "Bad taste" is endowed with an aura of nostalgia, and somehow becomes good—or at least collectible. The Sterns fail to give us a strong enough sense of shadow, of Original Sin, of speckled human nature, a feeling that "bad taste leads to crime." Great literary passages about bad taste always give us that awareness, as well as amusing us superficially. I refer to Chapter 17 of *Huckleberry Finn*, parts of *The Great Gatsby*, passages of *Lolita*, and much of the fiction of Flannery O'Connor. What—considering the blighted environment and the helpful bookshelf—do we need the Sterns for?

This account of bad taste not only lacks depth, it lacks breadth—and for an "encyclopedia," that is damning. Anyone could think of scores of obvious and gross examples of bad taste omitted from this account: chewing gum is one. Television is another. Various advertisements, foods, articles of dress—take your pick. But even if the coverage were doubled, the campy attitude and shallow view would still cripple a book hobbled by a highly selective field of choice. There is a pattern of selection and exclusion that might be called "political," for want of a better term.

I think that the Sterns' list of distasteful items and people and places represents an upper-middle-class view of the lower-middle class, and even an Eastern view of the Heartland and the Bible Belt. I find it bizarre that they have included the Smoky Mountains—but not New York City. I find it perverse that they have cited Las Vegas—but not Massachusetts. I find it weird that they have singled out Charo, Liberace, and Dolly Parton—but not Senator Kennedy, Bishop Spong, or Dr. Ruth.

The Sterns are not about to mock the sordid icons of the privileged. "Civil rights," "socialism," "multiculturalism," and "Washington, D.C." are absent from their litany. "Vans" are amusing, but imported luxury sedans are sacrosanct. "Cool Whip," "Hawaiian Shirts," and "Spam" rate a sneer, but there's no mention of alfalfa sprouts, the garment industry, or designer water.

The Sterns take the easy way out. As far as "bad taste" is concerned, they have it both ways. Either it's cute, or it's for bumpkins. If it's *bad*, it's not here. Wonder Bread may not be nourishing, but it won't kill anybody. I looked in vain for something in bad taste that was actually a problem, a real threat, like sodomy, drugs, or abortion. I don't say that "Cedar Souvenirs" are in good taste, but they aren't a menace to civilization.

Hamburger Helper is a symptom, not a cause. Rabid marketing schemes and industrial ugliness are—sad to say—at the heart of our economy. The mythical right to be wrong is part

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of the American Dream. So—here we are. To study bad taste is to look in the national mirror. These authors averted their eyes from the big picture, and blinked at the most revelatory implications of bad taste.

But one good thing about their *Bad Taste* is that, though they omitted Oprah Winfrey, Kitty Dukakis, and Phil Donohue, the dust jacket does feature a picture of Jane and Michael Stern.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

The Key to Victory

by Alan J. Levine

Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War
by John Ellis
New York: Viking;
643 pp., $29.95

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John Ellis, a well-known British military historian, has made a major contribution to our understanding of the nature of World War II with an unflattering reappraisal of the effectiveness and leadership of the Allied forces. His views are not always just, but he raises issues that, while not totally ignored, have usually been confronted only on a piecemeal basis by other historians. It is the merit of *Brute Force* not that it uncovers things that are entirely new—though it sometimes does that too—but that it creates a new way of looking at things.

Ellis presents two arguments. First, that Allied superiority in industrial strength and at least potential military force, rendered an Axis military victory impossible, or nearly impossible, at least from the point the United States entered the war. Indeed, while many people, including Winston Churchill, have regarded Pearl Harbor as the true turning point of the war, Ellis strongly implies that an Axis victory was never in the cards at all, although he does not explicitly formulate this idea. Ellis marshals considerable evidence to show that, contrary to widespread belief, the British were never close to losing the Battle of Britain, nor were the Allies close to losing the Battle of the Atlantic. The available German air and sea forces were just too small to secure victory in those crucial engagements. More doubtfully, he argues that the Nazis never had any chance of winning the Russian campaign.

Ellis's main thesis, however, is that after the tide of war had swung firmly in favor of the Allies, their poor tactics and grasp of the conduct of operations made the war far longer and costlier than necessary. The Allies smashed their enemies by "brute force"—primarily massive firepower, rather than imaginative maneuver and tactics. Industrial strength was the key to victory. Of the many critical battlefields, he points out, Detroit was not the least significant. That insight would not have startled anyone in the 1940's, but its truth has since been obscured by the cults woven around some Allied leaders, and, sadly, by the fact that Detroit is not what it once was.

There is plenty of justification for Ellis's strictures on Allied tactics and leadership in the field; as Lord Alexander once admitted, the Germans were "quicker" than the Allied ground forces at just about everything. The Western armies, in general, were slow, inflexible, and unimaginative at all levels, while the British especially were hampered by poor tank tactics and failure in securing cooperation between different arms. The Soviets were even worse, addicted to crude, repetitive frontal attacks and a senseless disregard for losses. Nor were the top Western commanders outstanding. Ellis is, if anything, particularly harsh with his own country's leaders, expressing genuine anger at Sir Arthur Harris and his insensate persistence with the policy of area bombing of German cities in 1944-1945. Field Marshal Montgomery, once widely regarded by the British as a second Wellington, comes off almost as badly. Ellis speaks of his "distrust of maneuver" and "baleful influence" on operations. But Montgomery's many (and amply justified) American critics will not be pleased to find that George Patton does not come off all that much better. Ellis allows that, unlike his British *bête noire*, Patton was clever at exploiting breaks in the enemy front, but not so good at creating them or at actually destroying enemy forces. In this case, and some

BRIEF MENTIONS

KNUT HAMSUN: SELECTED LETTERS
Volume 1, 1879-98
Edited by Harald Naess and James McFarland
Norwich, England: Norvik Press; 306 pp., $45.00
(Distributed in the U.S. by Dufour Editions, Chester Springs, PA)

Like Strindberg, Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun struggled all his life against the provincial limitations of being a writer in a generally unknown Scandinavian language, and his affection for Germany, which continued through World War II and for which he was to be branded, like Pound, as mentally "impaired," can perhaps be explained by the desire of a man to be remembered in what was and is, for better or worse, the most culturally powerful country in Europe.

Born Knut Pedersen in 1859 to a poor tailor and farmer (he took his penname from his uncle's farm of Hamsund, where he grew up), Hamsun was largely self-taught and self-created. If these letters are any indication of what took up most of his time, he was also tirelessly and perhaps necessarily self-promoting. But he was talented, too, and these letters cover the years in which he wrote some of his best books: the powerful and autobiographical novel *Hunger*, the wonderful *Pan*, and *Mysteries*. Hamsun also spent several of these years (1882-84 and 1886-88) in America, in Wisconsin, Minneapolis, and Chicago, and a good number of the letters here were written in English, specifically those to his German publisher, Albert Langen. For as his editors note, despite Hamsun's great sympathy for Germany, it was a country he never knew and a language he never learned to speak.

Many of these letters are about money, or the lack of it, but they are valuable for the occasional glimpse one has of the great figures of his day, and for the insight they give to a very talented writer, and one who deserves greater attention and appreciation in this country.

—*Katherine Dalton*

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others, he may be less than just. It is true, however, that Patton and other Allied generals usually enjoyed a crushing superiority over their opponents in the offensive phase of the war. Yet, with few exceptions, their operations amounted to pounding the enemy to a pulp and forcing him back. The Allies repeatedly failed to block German retreats even in very favorable situations. Montgomery's failure to cut off Rommel's retreat from Alamein to Tunisia, the delay in closing the Falaise gap, and the failure to block enemy evacuations across the Strait of Messina and the Scheldt, are all cases in point.

Nevertheless, while Ellis's views are generally well-founded, he is not immune to the vices of overstatement and one-sidedness, and, occasionally, of inaccuracy. He does not cover, or slides over, some cases where the Allies did well despite inferior strength — such as the siege of Malta, Midway, Guadalcanal, and the first stage of the Battle of the Bulge. He unduly plays down the Italian role in North Africa and Sicily, thus somewhat inflating the Allied superiority in those campaigns. While his treatment of Bomber Command's campaign against Germany is broadly correct, it contains a number of minor factual errors. He eagerly cites the strong criticisms of the Allied armies' performance made by historians like Russell Weigley, which refer to the earlier stages of the 1944-1945 campaign, but not the estimates by the same men that the U.S. Army, especially, was performing far better in the last stages of the war. The same is true, to some extent, of the Soviets. Ellis cites F.W. von Mellenthin's grim description of Soviet tanks blundering around in 1942, but merely comments that later on Soviet tank commanders acted with "more conviction and dash." Mellenthin, by contrast, insisted that by 1944 the Soviet armored forces were "a highly mobile and keenly edged tool, handled by daring and capable commanders." Allied performance, if never as professional as that of the Germans, exhibited more improvement over time than he allows.

There is a curious gap in Ellis's study of the war. While stressing Allied superiority in production on one hand, and operations and tactics on the other, he shows a curious reluctance to examine critically Allied grand strategy, save in making an unconvincing criticism of the Americans for launching a dual drive across the Pacific instead of attacking along a single axis, preferably in MacArthur's theater. (Ellis holds a mildly favorable view of MacArthur, although he wrongly blames him for the foolish attacks against bypassed Japanese forces launched by the Australians in 1945.) This view is unconvincing, because supply considerations, and the availability of aircraft carriers, favored a Central Pacific drive once the naval balance was clearly in the Americans' favor. That offensive afforded a quicker way to get across the enemy's supply line to Southeast Asia, and obtain bases near Japan, than an attack based in the Southwest Pacific. It must be admitted, however, that it is almost refreshing to see a reasonable treatment of MacArthur's career, one unmarked by the ideological resentments that have been all too apparent in most recent American appraisals of the man.

Ellis strangely refrains from discussing the wisdom of a number of questionable strategic choices such as the decision to land in Sicily instead of Sardinia — although, as Eisenhower and Mountbatten pointed out at the time, the latter island was a better avenue of approach to the Italian mainland. Nor does he question the decisions to land in southern France on the one hand, and to continue the offensive in Italy after August 1944.

Moreover, while John Ellis is eloquent about the brutality, slaughter, and sheer misery involved in winning World War II, the tenor of some of his criticisms of Allied generals suggests that he has not entirely outgrown a romantic view of what can be expected in battle. His ideas of success, and what can reasonably be expected in war, sometimes suggest exaggerated expectations of what generalship can achieve. Decisive victories with lopsided losses, successful battles of encirclement, and triumphant pursuits of defeated enemy forces are particularly favored subjects for military historians, but are simply not that common in war, even with highly skilled commanders.

Such criticisms, however, should not obscure the fact that *Brute Force* is in many ways a remarkable book. They are, in fact, necessary because this work will almost certainly become a classic of military history. It would be unfortunate if its minor defects and exaggerations gain acceptance, along with its basic theses — theses that do not make for self-congratulation, or pleasant reading, but that are largely true.

Alan J. Levine is a historian and author of the recently published The Soviet Union, the Communist Movement, and the World *(Praeger).*

LIBERAL ARTS

FISHER AMES ON CITIZENSHIP

We have absurdly and presumptuously considered our condition as citizens, not as a state of probation for the trial of our virtues, but the heaven where their indolence is to find rest, and their selfishness an everlasting reward. We have dared to suppose our political probation was over, and that a republican constitution, when once fairly engrossed in parchment, was a bridge over chaos that could defy the discord of all its elements. The decision of a majority, adopting such a constitution, has sounded in our ears like a voice saying to the tempestuous sea of liberty, thus far shalt thou go, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.

—*Boston Gazette*, July 19, 1804

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Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Motel California

◆

Folks keep asking me when I'm going to write about California. (They generally lick their chops when they ask it. They seem to think I'm going to trash the place. I wonder why?) Anyway, yeah, it's true that I've been living in the Golden State for several months now, and I haven't said much about it. There's a reason for that.

You see, I came here intending just to lie low, do my work, and try to be unobtrusive. I took up volleyball and even bought some Birkenstock sandals (what my students back home call "Air Jesus"). I resolved to keep an open mind and a closed mouth. Guests don't criticize their hosts. It's only polite.

But Californians keep asking what I think about their state, and saying that I haven't been here long enough to have an opinion usually won't do. These people like their state a lot—folks in the Bay Area, especially, love it where they are—and they want to hear you agree with them.

Well, no Southerner should criticize folks for liking their state. It's right that Californians should like California. But elsewhere people don't always expect or even want outsiders to agree with them. Your average New Yorker, for instance, couldn't care less whether you like his state; in fact, if he thinks you're complaining about it, he'll try to top you with some horror story of his own. Southerners do get angry at outsiders' criticism, but we tend to believe you can't expect much else from Yankees. (Besides, without ignorant criticism to defend the South against, being a Southerner wouldn't be half so much fun.)

Anyway, when Californians insist that I tell them what I think, sometimes I can get off the hook by raving about the restaurants, the climate, and the scenery—all of which are truly wonderful. But I don't like to lie outright, so when someone asks me point-blank about the people and their folkways, I have to tell them that I find California a strange place. I've told enough of them by now that I might as well tell you, too. Besides, I should be safely back home by the time this sees print.

Regular readers of this letter will know, of course, that California has no monopoly on strangeness, and also that I have nothing against strangeness, as such. But California is strange in strange ways. Almost every day brings some bizarre new observation: an aged coot roller-skating in the shopping mall, a photograph in the *Stanford Daily* of a coed shower in a Stanford residence hall, a flying squad of San Jose evangelists trying to exorcise San Francisco on Halloween, Ron Dellums's political opinions being taken seriously—I could go on and on.

What really lets me know I'm in a different culture, though, is that my otherwise normal California friends don't find these things remarkable. It's not that they've lost their capacity for wonder or shock—I can produce either with stories about the South. It's just that my friends and I are *used to* different things.

Beyond that, I think there really are differences in what we could call regional character. It's hard to write about this without gross generalizing. Sure, there are all kinds of exceptions, and I may be wrong, anyway—I did say that I just got here. It's also hard to write about this without taking cheap shots—I mean, coming to California and writing about rootlessness and narcissism is like going to England and writing about the food and the weather—but that's what I notice.

And it's not just me. R.W.B. Lewis tells about William James's impressions of the Bay Area. James got here in 1906, just in time for the great earthquake, which impressed him considerably. He was getting five thousand dollars for a short series of lectures at Stanford (on, among other things, the moral equivalent of war), and he had every reason to be happy. Like me, he found the climate ideal, and the landscape stunning. In fact, Professor Lewis reports, James found everything pleasing, except the "social insipidity" and the "terrible 'historic vacuum and silence.'"

Well, I don't share James's stern New England view of insipidity (Southerners do their best to be pleasant, too), but I do know what he meant. California is, after all, a state where "judgmental" is a bad word. My buddy Don, visiting from Michigan, jokes that the license plates here ought to say "I'm OK, you're OK." (New York plates, he suggests, could say, "I'm OK, You Can Go F--- Yourself.") I haven't actually heard the word "mellow" since I got here, but those Doonesbury cartoons a few years ago were right on the money.

Take the way Californians deal with hostility. It's not what I'm used to. Where a Southerner would respond with counter-hostility, a Californian may want to help you *work through* it. In any case, the object of your hostility is likely to see it as *your* problem. (An essay in the *American Spectator* a while back talked about a good example, the passive-aggressive response of California salesclerks to irate customers.) What this means is that hostility does no good at all. It doesn't even make you feel better.

In any case, and for whatever reason, give credit where it's due: the level of civility in casual public interaction is the highest I've ever experienced outside the South. It's remarkable how seldom you hear voices raised in anger, at least at strangers, in public—at other drivers, say. When you do, it's likely to be some out-of-stater who doesn't care about bad karma.

James's "historic vacuum and silence" is real enough, too. Any building from before the First World War is ancient. When images of the mythic past turn up—say, in advertising—they're from the Gold Rush days. The Spanish era seems to survive only in place names, their original meanings long since forgotten. How else to explain "Los Altos Hills" or "Lake

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Lagunita"? Who seriously thinks of Our Lady of the Angels in connection with El Lay, or of Santa Cruz as having anything to do with the cross of Christ?

The result, for some of us anyway, is reflected in one of my favorite California stories. When some professor (maybe Hugh Kenner?) who had taught out here for many years left to take a job back east, someone asked him how it felt to be leaving after all that time. He said, "Like checking out of a motel."

California, what I've seen of it, is like that: very pleasant, a good place to spend some time, but not somewhere you could actually get attached to. I'll leave with fond memories, but I won't *miss* it, exactly—not like I miss the South.

Most Californians seem to feel the same way. Many, in fact, don't even recognize that there's any other way to feel. So many came to California in the first place because they liked what it had to offer; if somewhere else offers more, they'll move on (as many now seem to be doing to Oregon). Location is just another consumer decision, a utilitarian, cost-benefit calculation—a different proposition from liking a place because it's your home. When Californians ask you to admire their state, they're asking you to compliment their discernment and good taste, just as they'd like you to admire their choice of automobile or wine.

Some people like to argue that the South is the most American part of America—usually as a compliment, though sometimes (as in a trashy book called *The Southern Mystique*) not. But John Crowe Ransom claimed in *I'll Take My Stand* that, no, the South is the most *European* part of the nation. I now think Ransom was right. The South is different from the rest of the country, but especially from California, in many of the same ways Europe is different from America as a whole.

Two of my friends out here are Englishmen. Both grew up loving American music (jazz for one, rock and roll for the other); both came here straight out of university, became citizens, and haven't looked back. Both despise England; both love America. Both told me, in almost exactly the same words, "If you like America, you should like California."

I can see that. It's easy for a Southerner to make fun of California as a sort of New Age Florida, just as it's easy for Europeans to make fun of bumptious, naive, self-absorbed America. But the place can be exhilarating. The liberation from the past, from attachment to a social and even physical "place," the freedom to pursue happiness any way you can afford, the sheer newness and flux and sense of unending *possibility*—that's what America used to offer, and California still does. And that can be powerfully alluring, particularly to someone unhappy with a more rigid or traditional place—a place, that is, like England, or the South.

Yeah, I can see it. But it doesn't appeal to me. Frankly, I feel about California the way some of my Baptist friends feel about Bob Jones University, that it's a caricature of their tradition, an exaggeration of some of its features to the point of ugliness. No doubt if California were a separate country, I'd find its culture as charmingly exotic as its landscape and cuisine. But I don't like the idea that one American congressman in eight comes from here: those guys make laws that I have to obey. I don't like being held responsible as an American for what Californians do (no more, I presume, than they like being held accountable for what Southerners do). Most of all, though, I don't like being made to feel like the kind of anti-American European I've always despised.

John Shelton Reed should have returned by now to his home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, after a year in the Bay Area.

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Letter From Scotland

by Katherine Dalton

Beyond the Fringe

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Our Scottish friends were trying to explain the phenomenon of the television police, and we were trying to understand. Television sets are taxed yearly in Britain and require an annual sticker. But since the sticker buying is done on the honor system, the citizens of Great Britain enjoy an occasional visit from the television police, who come into the house to make sure the stickers are current. This year the postman had come up the glen sounding a warning that the sticker checker was just behind him. Our friends were in the clear but there was a lady up the glen, said Margaret, who'd had to make a quick run to the post office for a sticker for her black-and-white, and who'd simply hid her three color sets.

With a few exceptions the Scots seem resigned to the television tax, but the same cannot be said of the poll tax, which, they will remind you, Scotland had a year before the rest of the union. In Edinburgh, whose beauty is not generally marred by graffiti, what graffiti we did see was opposing that tax. In general the level of Scottish resentment against England goes largely unreported here, but the Scots National Party has a fair amount of sentimental support in Scotland, even among those who do not really want to break with England. (One strongly nationalistic lady of my friends' acquaintance persists in calling the land below the Tweed "Englandshire.")

We were in Perthshire to see our friends, but the main purpose of our trip had been to attend all we could at the Edinburgh Festival and its accompanying Fringe. By my count there were this past August sixteen Festival theater productions—the bigger, more ornate shows, where the companies have been invited—and something like 700 on the Fringe, where the quality ranges from good to awful, and where anyone who can rent a venue and snake his way through the British labor laws can mount a production. Given the sheer number of offerings and our limited

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time, we saw about one percent of what was playing—and that's just counting the theater, not the music, and dance, and the poetry readings.

Edinburgh is very proud of a festival that has put it on the international map, brings in tourist dollars, and allows it to outshine London for a month. Fittingly enough, then, the best play we saw was a Scottish production: the Traverse Theatre's production of *The Hour of the Lynx*. Edinburgh's Traverse has a good reputation for Fringe shows and this year mounted (among eleven others) this excellent play by Per Olav Enquist. *The Hour of the Lynx* is really a Swedish *Agnes of God*, for those of you who remember John Pielmeier's drama about a mother superior, a psychiatrist, and a novice charged with murdering her newborn baby, all in their various ways struggling for faith. Here in Enquist's play there is a young man (charged with a seemingly purposeless murder), a psychiatrist, and a female pastor.

The boy, never named, has been given a cat as part of an empathy experiment, the results of which have been disastrous—and the play takes for its themes the psychiatrist in need of counseling, the pastor in need of faith, and a young man who with his broken family and broken mind needs death more than anything else. The loss of the cat and his return, his "conversations" with the boy, and his promise that he died and was risen in order to bring the boy home—to the only heaven he can imagine, his grandfather's now destroyed house—unfold in a series of angry three-way conversations. The great power of Enquist's play comes from the poignancy of these searches for God, for the need that even enlightened modern Sweden has for some rhyme and reason, and for a very personal Savior. I can't tell how well Kim Dambaek's translation follows the original, but it played beautifully, and Simon Donald was especially good as the boy.

Oddly enough, that was about it for a solid drama among the productions we saw. Everything else, however good, was spectacle. The production values were very high in an American show, *Juan Darién*, produced by the Music-Theatre Group of New York. Originally staged at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1988, *Juan Darién* won two Obies, no doubt for its sophisticated mix of music and masks and puppetry. Uruguayan Horacio Quiroga's story is about a jaguar cub turned into a child by the love of his foster mother, and turned back into a jaguar by the cruelty of his neighbors. The puppets ranged from Balinese shadow puppets to huge facial masks to full-scale, larger-than-life human-powered dolls, including an evil schoolteacher with a long warning finger and an open, flapping book atop his head instead of hair. The lyrics were sung in Spanish; the music was modern with a heavy overlay of Asian and Australian instruments; and the cast self-consciously multiracial. Despite the youth of the show's hero and the number of children in the audience, this is not a show for kids, and its needless coarseness was dismaying. But visually it was a success, and if the puppets were not completely original, reminiscent as they were of *Coppelia* and *Nutcracker* and Edvard Munch, they were wonderful all the same.

Also beautifully produced but again, not really a play in the old-fashioned sense was Daniel Reardon's *Spenser's Laye*, done by the Irish company Connaught. Here Edmund Spenser is an idealist in medieval garb, his patron Raleigh a bellowing Texan, his admirer Robert Devereux a Restoration fop, and his wife Elizabeth a Cork housewife who reappears (it's the same actress) as his patroness Elizabeth Gloriana. *Spenser's Laye* is a play about playing with language—an Elizabethan pasttime if there ever was one—but the mix of periods is confusing and seemingly purposeless, except as part of the joke.

The drama turns on the paternity of Edmund Spenser's beloved son, the intrigues of Raleigh and Devereux and Cecil in a fight for the favors of the Queen, a poetical contest, and Spenser's pension. The set and costumes were beautiful in black and white, with a huge round mirror centerstage that served variously as bed and step and, when Gloriana stood upon it, the world at her feet. Equally wonderful were the period songs, among them "Musing," Raleigh's "Now What Is Love," and "Tobacco is Like Love."

In the disappointing category falls Britain's National Youth Music Thea-

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tre (not to be confused with Britain's National Youth Theatre), which mounted an original production called *October's Children*. The story is based loosely on the life of Gogol but is essentially about the street children that wandered the countryside following the October Revolution in 1917. The father of our heroine, Natasha, is a nobleman, but after his death this little child of privilege finds herself left to her own devices on the streets of St. Petersburg, finally joining up with a gang of likewise lost or abandoned children. There were some good moments: one clear boy soprano, and a good Baba Yaga number done by three young girls as the witch's three heads, dramatic and funny and tuneful all at once. But most of the rest of the music was entirely modern, which is to say tune-free, and quite difficult, and young Natasha did not quite have the voice for it. The book was terrible. "Did your mother sing you that song?" asks the hero at one point. "Then she was a Russian!" Similarly the politics would have gone over better three years ago when Jeremy James Taylor and Frank Whateley and David Nield started putting the show together. Gogol is not perhaps the man of the moment, caught as that country is now between *perestroika* and the crackdown in the Baltic states.

Leaving the Western world altogether was the Ninagawa Company's doublebill of a traditional Noh play, *Sekidera Komachi*, and Yukio Mishima's reworking and modernizing of the same story, *Sotoba Komachi*. In some ways Yukio Yoshimura, performing the traditional Noh, was the less disconcerting, though his performance of an old woman remembering the conquests of her youth contained no action, little drama, and almost no movement. We were watching the play of her thoughts across her painted face, a piece of theatrical haiku that was very strange for a Westerner. But the Mishima, with its mix of East and West, its magic and overblown emotions, and its typically Mishimesque finish (love = death), in its effort to blend two traditions failed to encompass either. Again, the production values were very high; the wonderful falling hibiscus flowers made for an excellent effect, but the play was disturbing in a way that was only creepy and brought no emotional release, and so as a tragedy it failed.

Finally, what seemed to be the hit among the invited Festival shows, and something I did not see, was the French company Archaos' *Bouinax*, which was generally described as a postmodern, Mad Max circus. But there are some things I cannot manage, and these include productions that open with an intended-to-be-humorous dwarf in a wheelchair and finish with a staged beheading complete with the drinking of the "dead" man's blood. It seems inevitable that this should come to New York and you will just have to read the *Times* for a more complete description.

With the possible exception of the Enquist play, the best night we spent out was not at the theater at all but at Edinburgh's Acoustic Music Centre. Every year during the Festival the Centre sets aside one room for a sing-along. Anybody with enough courage and a song to sing can come up and perform, and almost anybody does; the night we were there the crowd ranged from some moderately successful Scottish folksingers (such as Robin Laing) to visiting American and English tourists, and the songs varied from the Beatles to "The Soldier Maid"—happily more of the latter. It occurred to me, sitting there, that this haphazard and very Scottish sing-along, which cost the bar nothing and the patrons only the price of a few pints, was more appealing and in a deeper sense a real "cultural experience" than Festival productions such as the Japanese Noh or the French circus, which probably each cost thousands of pounds to bring over. In other words, between the Centre and the Traverse, what was truly best about this International Festival was its most Scottish parts. And I hope that one of the benefits of English/Scottish tensions and Scotland's relative poverty is that both have encouraged a very deeply felt Scottish pride, so that the Scots know this.

Katherine Dalton is the managing editor of Chronicles.

LIBERAL ARTS

ITALIAN DISSENT ON THE GULF WAR

Most of the major political parties in Italy support their country's participation in the anti-Iraq alliance, but a strange anti-war coalition has emerged, of Communists, Greens, Communion Liberation Catholics, and the Lega Lombarda, whose leader, Senator Umberto Bossi, has been the most outspoken critic of the war. According to the *Corriere della Sera* (January 20), Bossi told his followers that the War in the Gulf and the suppression of Lithuanian independence are parallel developments:

"The war in the Gulf and the repression of the autonomist tendencies in Lithuania serve the same objective: to reimpose the division of the world into two blocks as in the time of Yalta. On the one hand, there is Bush flexing his muscles in the Gulf: on the other is Gorbachev repressing the struggle for agreement. We regret that America no longer has a Reagan but a man full of doubts and hesitations like Bush. . . . The dead Lithuanians are our heroes."

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POLITICS

Jeanne Berg

The Gulf Crisis in Europe

by Tomislav Sunic

Whatever may be the outcome of the crisis in the Gulf, one thing is already certain: European intellectuals will no longer be polarized along ideological lines, but divided along geopolitical fault lines. For the first time the European right is marching hand-in-hand with the European left, in common protest against the U.S. involvement in the Gulf. For the first time also the conservative press in Europe is printing anti-war articles whose pacifist tenor could easily outdo any leftist journal. By contrast, many former "sixty-eighters" who until recently tinkered with instant pacifism and global order under the banner of Marx, have discovered the glitter of the Stars and Stripes. That the emperor can swiftly change his garb is evident is France, where the former Marxist Régis Debray advocates the return of Europe to Europeans, while the former cheerleader of Maoism, Bernard Henry Lévy, praises the American war machine and its unflinching support of Israel.

The attitude of European conservatives towards American involvement in the Gulf is complex on both geopolitical and philosophical counts. Before World War II, European conservatives of all stripes had a low opinion of America, a country they felt was exporting decadence, unwilling to give up its globalist preaching, and unable to reign in its marauding plutocratic and anational elites. After the war this hostile attitude markedly changed, partly because in the face of the real Communist threat coming from the East, the Hollywood culture of the West seemed the lesser evil.

Several years ago, when the spirit of Yalta came to an end in Eastern Europe, anticommunism lost its *raison d'être*. Its place had to be filled by the conservative *risorgimento* against liberal anomie and its major standard-bearer, the United States of America. Unlike their counterparts in America, European conservative militants, be they of traditional, nationalist, or revolutionary inclination, come from a pool of articulate and witty thinkers whose efforts are often put to the service of seemingly unpopular political platforms. Jean Marie Le Pen, the head of the French National Front, or Pino Rauti of the extreme right Movimento Sociale Italiano, their shrill nationalism notwithstanding, usually rely, behind the scenes, on the brains of those with prestigious academic and literary credentials.

The very independent-minded "New Right," probably one of the most outspoken groups of intellectuals operating today in Europe, has made no secret of its opposition to American Mideast policy. Its chief figure, Alain de Benoist, sees in the American presence in the Gulf the attempt of a dying global power to overextend its global ideology to peoples who might have a radically different idea of the world. In several of his recent pieces, Benoist compares American decision-makers to "world improvers," who, as true heirs of the biblical manifesto, endlessly search for the archetypes of evil: Indians, Germans, Communists, and now, at the end of the century, the camel-riding, bomb-throwing, Israel-hating Arabs. In a sense, European conservative criticism of American foreign policy suggests that the American elites are incompetent to understand foreign traditional cultures; hence, when they fail to overawe their opponents either with money or the ideology of human rights, they must resort to airborne policing. Predictably, Benoist's current writing is more reminiscent of a paleo-leftist militant than of somebody with impeccable conservative credentials. Needless to say, few if any European conservatives believe in the U.S. pledge to uphold the rule of law in the Gulf. Most of them, along with an increasing number of leftists, concur that the purpose of U.S. military involvement is to drive a wedge between the Arab and the European world and further slow down the creation of grand Euro-Arab economic alliance. Behind the veneer of American legalism, Benoist sees a push for world supremacy by a hegemon whose major objectives have always been the same. In a piece in the December 6, 1990, issue of *Le Monde*, published a month before the air bombing started, he enumerated American objectives as follows:

—To remedy its economic problems and to avert a recession by escaping into the logic of war.

—To implant itself permanently in the Gulf in order to control oil wells.

—To destroy a regional power in the Middle East, to the benefit of those who have been demanding its annihilation for months.

—To take advantage of the transformation of the Soviet Union into a "Western power," in order to convert the Security Council of the United Nations—already dominated by the Westerners—into an embryonic global government and a new source of international law.

—To set up a world order that would: a) marginalize the countries of the South; b) subordinate the political

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sphere to the juridical sphere; c) foster in international law an ethics that would legitimize Western interests.

Similar views are shared by Robert Steuckers, a New Rightist who in a piece published in the November 1990 *Diorama Letterario* (Florence) analyzes the clash in the Gulf in terms of great geopolitical earthquakes. Once again a major maritime power is waging war against a continental actor: the Behemoth and Leviathan have locked their horns in the desert, as they did earlier in this century in the war over Europe. By largely subscribing to the ideas elaborated by prominent political thinkers such as Karl Haushofer and Jordis von Lohausen, Steuckers draws a parallel between Kuwait and Holland with their ports, on the one hand, and land-locked, peasant-minded Germany and Iraq on the other. In 1648 France and Sweden propped up the artificial Holland in order to prevent the Germans from coalescing into a single large nation-state; today, England and America are shoring up the estuary Kuwait against a continental country in quest of access to the sea. And just as the task of the Dutch mercantile elites consisted of choking Germany's seaborne aspirations, so is the purpose of Kuwaiti petro-monarchs to keep the English and American economy running full steam.

According to this theory of interdependence laid out by Steuckers, naval powers are in an eminent position to wage wars far from home. Their insular character combined with their great mobility, Steuckers alleges, necessitates a messianic foreign policy imbedded in a political theology of globalism. Unfortunately, global thinking results in global conflicts, which in turn run the risk of causing global wars. Steuckers writes that "the universalist ideology of the Americans, from Roosevelt onwards, has lead to world wars and the globalization of horror, when instead, as common sense would suggest, war should be limited by all means! To limit deliberately one's own action to his continental sphere of influence (that of Europe to Europeans, that of America to Americans) could automatically localize war and prevent it from spreading to the entire world."

But in addition to its global dimension, the Gulf War has taken on a surreal aspect. In a February 4, 1991, interview in *Der Spiegel*, the French cultural critic Jean Baudrillard, who could be counted as a disillusioned leftist and who is often quoted by New Rightists, argues that American political messianism has led to the unreality of nonstop TV bombardment superseding the objective world of bombed Iraqi targets. The war against Iraq, with its blown-up images of destroyed targets, is "pornographic," full of "fetal violence." "There is no need, literally, for this war," continues Baudrillard, because "the opponents are not on the same footing; they are not on the same turf of the same reality." Accordingly, whether America wins or loses the war is of little importance. In a surreal system unfolding itself in total media implosion, as Baudrillard sees it, wars can be won any way—vicariously, at request, *à la carte*—like in a movie theater. And even if this conflict turns sour, Hollywood will shortly begin to crank out "clean" and heroic combat scenes. Is not the Gulf War already fought like in a movie, with tele-guided decisions and Smart weapons? Metareality has swallowed reality.

Although European conservative criticism has not officially reached the centers of real power in Europe, it has already made an impact on the major currents of thought, dragging in its wake the firepower of similar leftist attacks. A close scrutiny of the European press indicates that the American role in the Middle East appears to have already broken up former political coteries and created new alliances that ten years ago would have been considered impossible. In the context of the ongoing intellectual restructuring, Benoist's remarks do not differ much in flavor or in substance from the prestigious left-leaning *Le Monde Diplomatique*, which in a February piece signed by Ignacio Ramonet blames Europe for abdicating to America, a country "whose demonstrated ignorance of the Middle East is scary." Such views would have certainly found a favorable response even among the very nationalistic and very conservative weekly *Deutsche National Zeitung*, which for months now, while seconding the views of the leftist chorus, has been comparing the bombing of Baghdad to the Allied fire-bombing of Berlin, Bremen, Breslau . . .

Historical parallels are being drawn everywhere, by those who see in Saddam a reincarnated Hitler, and those who see the American bombing as high-tech colonialism or the fifth dimension of political surrealism. As others have suggested, the metaphor of the Gulf has already become a major ideological catalyst for new alliances among the traditionally frayed European intelligentsia. Indeed, a painful divorce is now under way between the proponents of the West and the adherents of a Europe from "Brest to Brest": those who are already eyeing the Berlin-Paris axis as the counterweight to the trilateral London-Washington-Tel Aviv. With geopolitical shifts caused by the German reunification, the centers of decision-making will undoubtedly move from Brussels to Berlin and Budapest, reviving old alliances while creating new worries for some.

The most painful yet fully predictable split is occurring among the leftist rank and file. Unlike conservatives, their lines of division are clearly ethnic and religious ones. In France, for instance, the famous SOS-Racisme, a socialist-inspired antiracist movement founded in 1984, is torn between those who support peace in the Mideast by resolving long-standing conflicts (such as the Palestinian question), and those who wish to punish Iraq by any means. Its chief figure, an eloquent black leader named Harlem Désir, has already collided with his intellectual superegos Marek Halter and Bernard Henry Lévy. Former bedfellows all across Europe are parting company, and scores of them are quickly changing their Moscow-Havana itinerary for a speedy trip to Washington via Tel Aviv.

The *perestroika* of European intellectuals will not, however, alleviate the plight of Arab immigrants in Europe. And beyond the rhetoric and the satire leveled at American decision-makers and their alleged ignorance of the Middle East, the problem of Arab immigration will remain. Today there are already ten million Muslims living in Europe—a sizable minority whose political weight and ability to shape European history can no longer be wished away. With their phenomenal birthrate, the Muslims in Europe are showing an old ethnic wisdom largely forgotten by Europeans: making babies is a continuation of politics by other means. Who needs, after all, Poitiers or

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Constantinople, who should fear Charles Martel or Queen Isabel of Spain, when there are more pleasant ways of conducting high politics? Demographics is the realm in which all Third World countries are staking out their future. And one thing is already certain: the fallout of the Mideast crisis will dislocate thousands more from northern Africa, bringing pressure on European borders that will lead, according to reflexive behavior observed time and again in all multiracial countries, to more racism and possibly more violence. Thus the initially well-planned, aseptic, "soft porn" war in the Gulf, as described by Baudrillard, may turn into a hard-core dirty exodus with potentially damaging consequences for both the Arab and European communities. If one adds to it the anticipated bust-up in the Balkans, the consequences could mean disaster. Yugoslavia's four million Muslims, who unlike Slovenes, Serbs, or Croats lack their matrix state, may lend themselves tomorrow to all types of religious and political agitation, causing ferment Central Europe has not witnessed since Suleiman the Magnificent.

A relatively insulated maritime power, such as America is, will surely never experience the ripple effects felt on a continent where fifty ethnic destinies are squeezed between the neighboring Africa and Asia. Many conservatives in Europe are also worried that the aftermath of the war in the Gulf will trigger a new wave of terrorism that, short of reaching the American shores, will play itself out in Paris and Rome. It is no small wonder that many conservatives would have preferred Saddam's 19th province to the emir-lead Kuwait whose amassed wealth is squandered by a chosen few. In this context the peace mission to Baghdad of the avowedly anti-immigrationist Jean Marie Le Pen no longer looks bizarre. Similarly, the recent resignation of the French minister of defense, Jean Pierre Chevènement, is the consistent act of a man who, unlike his recycled fellow-travelers, has not changed his leftist credo since the May Days of his cobblestone street-fighting against the French bourgeois establishment.

But there are also less visible reasons for conservatives' irritation with U.S. policy in the Middle East; important reasons that, strangely enough, may lead to a conservative and Muslim coalition. Admittedly, the end of the Cold War has deeply bruised the intellectual class, traditionally in search of certainties and systems. It has gobbled up their sense of historical time, leaving many European intellectuals adrift in the spiritual vacuum. Faced with apolitical apocalypse, the appeal of Islam, with its stress on rigor, valor, and virility, may be the right brew for those in search of a new destiny for Europe. Against the secular city that only bears the name of Christianity, Islam may offer for many an ideal of the sacred and a sense of community worth fighting and dying for. It must not be forgotten that some of the most eminent heavyweights among European conservatives, like Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt, and Oswald Spengler, their rejection of monotheism notwithstanding, showed a great deal of sympathy for Islamic culture. The Westerners may ridicule Muslims, their garb, and their veiled women, but is not Islam just another spring from the same monotheist source? Its record of zeal and intolerance is no worse than that of other monotheist beliefs. To be sure, all three monotheisms, so far, have championed a very impressive hit parade of violence against each other, but also against the *other*. Did not President Bush, despite his secular weapons, seek solace from a prominent American religious figure on the eve of January 16, 1991?

In a time when East and West are brooding over the end of history, in an age when hard ideologies have given way to soft ideologies, for many European conservatives, Islam may furnish if not a religion, then at least a method. Should this happen, Europe, this old laboratory of ideas, may be jolted back to life and seize the fleeting opportunity for another bid for world leadership. And then, when political tornadoes start sweeping over Eurasia, we may witness all kinds of surprises. Old alliances may crumble, new friendships may be forged, and ploughs may again turn into swords.

Tomislav Sunic is the author of Against Democracy and Equality: The European New Right *(Peter Lang Publishers)*. He teaches European politics at Juniata College in Pennsylvania.

A True Vindication of Edmund Burke

by Peter J. Stanlis

Mr. Conor Cruise O'Brien's "A Vindication of Edmund Burke," (*National Review*, December 17, 1990), contains many long established truths about Burke's politics — his consistency in principle, his remarkable insights and powers of prophesy, his strong critique of revolutionary ideology, and so forth. But amidst these trite truisms, which vindicate O'Brien's subject only to the uninitiated, he asserts some claims about the Enlightenment and Burke's religion and politics that are very dubious or simply false.

In 1975 the British historian John Lough warned against the loose use of "Enlightenment" as an abstract, all-inclusive category: "It is surely obvious that the greater the diversity of ideas which the term *Enlightenment* is stretched to cover, the less use it has as a scholarly tool. By the time the lowest common denominator can be discovered for ideas produced under such vastly different conditions, *Enlightenment* and *Lumières* become empty words." O'Brien would have done well to heed Lough's warning. Unless one equates the Enlightenment with the entire 18th century, it is meaningless rhetoric to call Burke "a child of the Enlightenment." O'Brien's indiscriminate inclusion of him under that term raises grave doubts that he understands either Burke or the enormously complex nature of that elusive category, and its vast range of interpretations.

O'Brien segments the Enlightenment arbitrarily, and identifies Burke with what he calls "the early, English or English-inspired phase of the Enlightenment. This was the Enlightenment of Locke . . . an Enlightenment that was compatible with a tolerant version of Christianity. This was Burke's Enlightenment." This is a colossal error. Burke always defended what he called the Christian commonwealth of Europe from its "enlightened" enemies — the materialists, atheists, deists, freethinkers, and epicureans who made their private "natural reason" the sole criterion for truth. In 1790 he charged that the primary

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objective of the French Revolution, which was based upon atheism, was to destroy the religious, legal, moral, and political social order and civilization of Europe that Christianity had built up over many centuries. Moreover, during the last seven years of his life Burke expressly denied that his era was any more "enlightened" than past ages.

Even when dealing with persons, O'Brien is a victim of his abstract categories. He knows that Locke and Burke were both members of the Church of England, both approved of the Revolution of 1688, and both are universally classified as Whigs. On this basis he concludes that Burke is a disciple of Locke. But in every one of these religious and political areas there is overwhelming historical evidence that Burke differed profoundly from his predecessor.

Burke was a philosophical dualist, for example, and believed in the reality of both matter and spirit, whereas Locke was a materialist and monist. Those who believe Burke was a follower of Locke's politics ignore their great differences in such matters as the following: their conceptions of the nature of man; the nature and proper relationship of Church and State; the role of history in society and politics; their understanding of the English constitution and meaning of political sovereignty; the distinctions between innovation, reform, and revolution; the meaning of the term "the people"; the fitness of a form of government to a given society; the relation of law or normative reason to will or power.

This inventory is by no means exhaustive. They also digressed in their use of language, in the meanings they each ascribed to such key terms as "natural law" and "natural rights," or "reason" and "rational," "liberty," "equality," etc. What is perhaps equally important, Burke's character, temperament, and personality are a world apart from Locke, as is very evident in the complex prose styles of Burke, which appeal aesthetically to the whole nature of man, in contrast to Locke's plain, flat, abstract, discursive, and utilitarian prose.

When O'Brien unites Burke and Locke as defenders of Christianity, as opposed to Voltaire, its declared enemy, he is betrayed into error once more by his wholly unhistorical and loose-jointed use of categories. Burke despised Voltaire's deism and attacks on Christianity. But despite his membership in the Church of England, Locke in his religious beliefs is practically indistinguishable from Voltaire. Sterling P. Lamprecht, a noted Locke scholar, has said: "He stood so close to the deists that he has sometimes been classified as one of their number." Locke's pupil, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, so classified his tutor.

Perhaps O'Brien can explain why it was that when Voltaire was in England, from 1726 to 1729, and read Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1691) and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), he said that he "abandoned Ovid for Locke," called him "Le Sage Locke," pronounced him the wisest of philosophers, and recorded in his *Notebook* (item 45), "Mr. Locke's reasonableness of the Christian religion is really a new religion," and in his unbounded admiration became a lifelong devoted champion of Locke's philosophy and religion? Upon his return to France, Voltaire made frequent use of Locke's religious ideas in his propaganda against Christianity, quoting him copiously in his *Letters Concerning the English Nation* and in his revolutionary *Lettres philosophiques*.

Bolingbroke, whose deism Burke satirized so intensely, was the friend and correspondent of Voltaire, and was as captivated by Locke's *Essay* as his French friend. Bolingbroke acknowledged that through Locke he was led to deism. Were Voltaire and the English and French deists wrong in claiming Locke as their teacher? Or does O'Brien err in uniting Locke with Burke against Voltaire?

The main difference between Locke and Voltaire lies not in their substantive religious beliefs but in their temperament and method. Voltaire perceived that Locke's "new religion," instead of destroying Christianity from without the Church, as Voltaire wished to do, would emasculate it from within.

In *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, Locke's most radical and polemical work, he wrote as a "minimalist" and pleaded in good conscience as a believing Christian, a rational defender of revelation, and a loyal Anglican that the Church of England should reform itself in order to attract members from the Dissenters. How? Locke advocated that it should reject its hierarchical structure and the authority of its bishops, abandon its canon law and theology, its creed and sacraments, its liturgy, all belief in mysteries and miracles, all external discipline, the Thirty-Nine Articles and Book of Common Prayer, all its religious customs and traditions — in short, its entire historical inheritance — as so many superstitions and "prejudices," in favor of one requirement for membership and salvation — to acknowledge that Christ is the Messiah. In the last section of his *Essay*, Locke stated the central principle of deism: "Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything."

What Locke viewed as religion his Anglican contemporaries perceived as irreligion. The ideas in his two books were attacked by a whole host of Anglicans, including Bishop Edward Stillingfleet and Jonathan Swift. He was charged with everything from renewing the atheism and materialism of Hobbes to Socinianism, Unitarianism, and deism, the very things for which English freethinkers and Voltaire hailed him.

Unlike Locke, Burke accepted the Church of England just as it was, with all of its virtues and weaknesses. He adhered to the Church out of personal convictions and real affection. Moreover, he regarded the Church with piety, as an important branch of Christianity, and a vital part of "the chain that connects the ages of a nation" with "the great mysterious incorporation of the human race," because religion was "one of the bonds of human society," and "its object [was] the supreme good, the ultimate end and object of man himself."

Burke was certainly aware of the great gap between himself and Locke in religious toleration. Burke's belief that "toleration was good for all, or it was good for none," made him both preach and practice universal religious toleration. In 1781, for example, when he learned that some Hindu Brahmins in London could not find the proper means of practicing the rituals of their faith, and had become the objects of derision of some rationalist freethinkers and wits, Burke placed his home at their disposal.

Burke knew that what passed for creedal toleration was often merely

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indifference to religion. His "Speech on the Acts of Uniformity" (1772) was his response to two Church of England clergymen, "minimalists" like Locke, who on grounds of reason and conscience had petitioned Parliament to be relieved from subscribing to the doctrines of their Church. His political rebuttal to their petition turns upon his important distinction between "the original rights of nature" for individuals and the civil and legal rights of institutions created by positive law and conventions, a basic principle in his political philosophy. Since the disaffected clergymen were free to follow their conscience outside the Church, Burke's religious rebuttal was that "the matter . . . does not concern toleration, but establishment."

Unlike Locke, Burke believed that membership in the Church was a moral duty, not a voluntary relationship to be determined arbitrarily and whimsically by each individual. In his rebuttal to the two clergymen, he cleverly used Locke against his two disciples:

> If the Church be, as Mr. Locke defines it, *a voluntary society*, etc., then it is essential to this voluntary society to exclude from her voluntary society any member she thinks fit, or to oppose the entrance of any upon such conditions as she thinks proper. For, otherwise, it would be a voluntary society acting contrary to her will, which is a contradiction in terms. And this is Mr. Locke's opinion, the advocate for the largest scheme of ecclesiastical and civil toleration to Protestants (for to Papists he allows no toleration at all).

Burke was well aware that Locke's famous and much admired theory of religious toleration, in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), was wholly sectarian, but on the broad all-inclusive basis of a generalized Protestantism. This did not distinguish it in principle from the more narrow, bigoted antipopery of the Levellers and Puritan sects of the Commonwealth. Burke also knew that in his lifetime, when religion and politics were closely intertwined, Locke's total lack of toleration for Roman Catholics was what gave sanction to such systems of persecution as the Penal Laws against Catholics in Ireland, and the rule of the Protestant Ascendency.

Not only in religion, but also in their politics regarding the Revolution of 1688 and the Whig tradition, Burke and Locke are in entirely different camps. Burke approved of the Revolution of 1688 on constitutional grounds — that it was morally necessary, legally legitimate, and politically prudent to prevent James II from establishing absolute monarchy, and to return England to its traditional form of constitutional limited monarchy, with power divided and balanced by Parliamentary rule. Burke never considered the king's Catholicism as a legitimate factor in his constitutional reasons for opposing his rule. To him, 1688 was "a revolution not made but prevented," because the king was in revolution to the constitution, and 1688 completed the Restoration that was made in 1660.

Locke approved of the Revolution of 1688 not on constitutional grounds, but out of religious bigotry against Catholics. He was eager to replace James with William, not in order to restore constitutional limited monarchy, since his real convictions did not include such a regime as a legitimate form of government. He preferred William because he believed that no Catholic had a legitimate claim to the Crown. Locke's anti-papist revolutionary activities were clearly evident during the decade before James became king, in his intimate association with his patron, Lord Ashley, later First Earl of Shaftesbury, whose hatred of Catholicism was pathological. Shaftesbury was involved or was the leader of a series of movements to prevent James from becoming king, including the infamous "Popish Plot," an unsuccessful attempt to place the Duke of Monmouth, Charles II's illegitimate son, on the throne, and the Exclusionist efforts in Parliament. For his revolutionary activities Shaftesbury was charged with high treason and imprisoned in the Tower of London, and Locke found it prudent to go into exile in Holland.

The year after his return to England in 1689, Locke published his *Two Treatises of Government*, with a preface that was intended to create the impression that these works were written to justify the Revolution of 1688. Locke's motive was to obscure his former revolutionary activities, to disguise his radical Commonwealth antimonarchical political philosophy, which the Whig aristocracy of 1689 strongly opposed, and to thus win the favor of the Whigs by convincing them he was in harmony with their political views. The myth his preface created was highly successful, and he confirmed it by his conservative behavior, which entailed refraining from any revolutionary activity between 1689 and his death in 1704. Thus throughout the entire 18th century there was a widespread conviction that Locke was a good Whig in the tradition of the Revolution of 1688.

This popular Whig myth endured for 266 years, until Peter Laslett shattered it in 1956 in his superb edition of Locke's two treatises. He proved that Locke wrote his two treatises between 1678 and 1681, not to justify the future revolution, but in support of Shaftesbury's anti-Catholic policy. Moreover, Laslett showed that Locke's politics were rooted in "the Good Old Cause" of the Commonwealth Levellers, not in the Whig politics of the aristocracy in 1688.

For O'Brien to admit that Locke's politics is rooted in the radical theories of the Commonwealth Levellers would compel him to abandon his claim that Burke is in the political tradition of Locke. If the Whig tradition begins with the Levellers of the Commonwealth, then Locke, not Burke, is the archetypal true Whig. But if it derives from the Revolution of 1688, then Locke's claim to the Whig tradition is illegitimate, and Burke is its true voice. In 1790, since the conflict was over whether the French Revolution was an extension of 1688, Burke was perfectly right to deny that Price and his colleagues in the Revolution Society could claim 1688 as their justification of the French Revolution. When Burke noted of Price and his colleagues that "in all their reasonings on the Revolution of 1688" they have in mind "a revolution which happened in England about forty years before," he identified Price with the Commonwealth radicals and thus connected him with Locke's politics.

Richard Ashcraft has recently shown that Locke's ties with the Levellers makes his politics far more radical than historians have supposed, and makes it

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wholly unfeasible to connect Burke with Locke. To Burke, the revolutionary theories of the Commonwealth radicals were outside of the Whig political tradition. It is remarkable indeed that O'Brien's "child of the Enlightenment" should have provoked over four hundred replies to his *Reflections* and other writings on the French Revolution, from the true children of the Enlightenment, those who followed Locke. I have read more than a hundred of these "replies" to Burke written between 1790 and 1797, and Locke is cited either by name, or by quoting him, or by referring to his doctrines, particularly to "natural rights," "equality," and "the sovereignty of the people."

O'Brien's frayed use of categories leaves him wondering about how much Burke understood his political differences with the "New Whigs." In the introduction to his edition of Burke's *Reflections*, O'Brien writes: "It is probable that Burke had never fully realized—until the events in France provided the critical test—how profoundly he was at odds with much that was fundamental in the philosophy of Englishmen with whom he had allied himself: Englishmen who cherished the principles of the Glorious Revolution and of the Enlightenment, and felt these principles to be essentially the same." Burke was too well read in British history and politics, and too perceptive, not to know how and where he differed from any of his fellow Whigs who were deceived by the myth Locke had created about his political orthodoxy. In discussing the Revolution of 1688 Burke heaps praise on many of its defenders, but he never mentions Locke. This is no careless oversight. Toward Locke Burke practices what he called "the precedence of reserve and decorum," which "dictates silence in some circumstances."

All that I have said against O'Brien's claim that Burke is in the religious and political tradition of Locke's Enlightenment has great bearing upon the conviction of many Americans today that Burke is the founder of modern political conservatism. For if O'Brien is right, then the liberals, not the conservatives, have the better claim to Burke. This claim should surprise no one who has read O'Brien's essay, "A New Yorker Critic," in the *New Statesman* (June 1963), where he agrees with Tom Paine, who pictures Burke as a "gifted liberal" who "kisses the aristocratic hand that hath purloined him from himself." O'Brien agrees with the left critics of Burke that he was a potential revolutionary, an Irish outsider and alienated man, who hypocritically served the English Whig aristocracy against his true political convictions.

In the introduction to his 1968 edition of Burke's *Reflections*, O'Brien severely castigates Ross Hoffman, Russell Kirk, and me for claiming that Burke was a political conservative. His criticism assumes that conservatism consists of a mindless defense of any established political authority, regardless of the beliefs or actions of those in power. Since Burke was a severe critic of King George III's ministers during the American War of Independence and attacked the established Protestant Ascendency in Ireland and Governor Warren Hastings' misrule in India, by O'Brien's reasoning he was not a conservative, but a liberal.

This line of reasoning totally ignores that conservatism includes a body of normative moral, legal, and constitutional principles by which to judge those who use or abuse political power. Since, as I showed in *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, Burke adhered strictly in his politics to the norms of moral natural law and constitutional law in holding rulers accountable for their uses of power, he was never more conservative than when he condemned those in power who violated these norms.

O'Brien attacked Ross Hoffman and Russell Kirk for making an analogy between Burke's account of the French Jacobins and contemporary Communists. He even quoted with approval Alfred Cobban's glib comment that "Burke has escaped from the more foolish jibes of the Left in Britain only to fall victim to the uncritical adulation of the Right in America." But ironically, in 1990, in "A Vindication of Edmund Burke," O'Brien himself greatly extends the very same analogy made by Hoffman and Kirk, but he does it in the name of liberalism. Apparently it was all wrong in 1968 for Hoffman and Kirk to "make the equation Jacobin equals Communist," and to "derive from Burke's later writings a repertory of maxims and incitements in support" of a conservative foreign policy, but if Burke can be claimed as a liberal, then O'Brien is justified in using the analogy.

It is to be regretted that the conservative claim to Burke should be attacked in *National Review*, by a man who in 1965 identified himself as a socialist and the type of liberal who is not "a false friend" to the revolutionary aspirations of "Africa, Asia and Latin America." In his article "The Perjured Saint," in the *New York Review of Books* (November 1964), O'Brien defended Alger Hiss through a sustained attack on the moral integrity of his accuser, Whittaker Chambers, a longtime *NR* contributor, whom he pictured as a chronic liar.

O'Brien's "A Vindication of Edmund Burke" is an attempt to destroy the thesis of Russell Kirk in *The Conservative Mind* by claiming that Burke is not the founder of modern political conservatism, but a liberal like John Locke and O'Brien himself. Fortunately, the case for Burke as a moral natural law and constitutional political philosopher is too well-established.

Peter J. Stanlis edited Studies in Burke and His Times *for thirteen years and is the author and editor of six books on Edmund Burke and his era. His seventh,* Edmund Burke: The Enlightenment and Revolution, *has just been published by Transaction.*

LIBERAL ARTS

AND THEY'RE GOING BANKRUPT

As a *New York Times* advertisement read last February 9, "Bloomingdale's Cares": "The battle against AIDS continues on the home front, and because we'll never surrender, we've opened a 'Red Hot and Blue' Shop on 2, with the greater portion of profits going to AIDS research and treatment. . . . Stop by our windows (or the new Shop) to see the video and hear the Cole Porter sounds of some very cool—and caring—people."

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Jeanne Berg

Dahrendorf and Burke

by George Watson

1789 & 1989

Just two centuries on, an echo of Edmund Burke and his most celebrated book has opportunely come out of Oxford.

It is by Sir Ralf Dahrendorf, a German-born political scientist who is now warden of St. Antony's College there; and it is called *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe in a Letter Intended to have been sent to a Gentleman in Warsaw* (1990).

Two hundred years ago Burke called his famous pamphlet *Reflections on the Revolution in France in a Letter Intended to have been sent to a Gentleman in Paris*, so the echo is knowing and deliberate. Like Burke, Dahrendorf is a constitutional liberal, full of the Magna Charta tradition, of James Madison's *Federalist* papers, of the centuries-old tradition of civil society and the need for the eternal vigilance that liberty requires. "Freedom does not just happen," he writes warningly to his Polish friend of recent events in Eastern Europe, mindful of the dangers of disenchantment. "It has to be created; it has to be defended at every point of the process; the attempt can fail." That is blunt talk. Both he and Burke, what is more, are immigrants and Anglophiles rather than English, since Burke came from Dublin and Dahrendorf from Hamburg and Berlin after a period, in the early 1970's, as a European Commissioner in Brussels.

So the conscious echo of Burke is a fitting and timely one, after just two centuries; but there the resemblance ends. The French Revolution of 1789 and the East European one of 1989 are in truth not much alike. Burke, who hated what the French were at, would surely have welcomed what has just happened in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic states. There are huge differences of scale, in any case, and all of them in favor of the 20th century. The French Revolution understandably looked to the last century like the most epoch-making event of modern history, but it was a rather minor affair compared with what the world has just witnessed in the death of communism. It was largely confined to one continent, for one thing; for another, it always looked reversible, and at Waterloo in 1815 it was reversed. But as Dahrendorf rightly insists, there can be no return in Europe to the corrupt and arthritic sway of the old Soviet *nomenklatura*. He has no truck with the easy excuse that the Soviet system was not what Marx or Lenin meant or that socialism was misapplied: he calls 1989 the death of socialism. "The old politics is spent." There will be no Waterloo to bring back this *ancien régime* — the cozy world, as he calls it, of the dacha, the armored limousine, and the 99 percent "vote" for the party leadership. It is Marxism that has failed, not a misunderstanding of Marxism. "Communism is gone, never to return." The very parties that once sustained it have splintered and collapsed. So the 20th century, just before its close, has at long last outlived its strange obsession with reliving the bloody fantasies of early Victorian thinkers about class war and race war. A dream ended in a nightmare; and now the dreamer, frightened by his own imagination, has woken up.

The great issue now, at once speculative and practical, is whether one can have a competitive economic system without democracy or democracy without a competitive economic system.

Is there any connection between the two — or rather, is that connection a tight and unconditional one? As an ex-sociologist as well as an ex-socialist, Dahrendorf is by now bracingly skeptical of immutable historical laws; and in a post-utopian age like this, laws of social evolution, whether Marxist or other, are no longer the wear, whether in or out of academia. But, in their place, there may now be a renewed chance for some close political observation of historical cases linked, as in Burke himself, less to laws of history than to moral principle. The notion of an objective morality is now back. "Why should we not make moral judgments?" an academic philosopher remarked defiantly the other day, impatient of the easy, fashionable view that all morality is personal or communal and ultimately no more than a matter of social conditioning. Like facts and statistics, moral views can be right or wrong, as anyone who contemplates the age of Hitler and Stalin must surely know; and the number of those ready to say so is now growing. Hence the return from laws to principles, from Marx to Madison and Samuel Johnson, from theory to commitment.

That commitment is based not on scriptures but on instances. Mankind learns political lessons from events, above all, both corporate and private, as Central Europeans once learnt from Nazism and its failure. It listens, watches, and apprehends; it acquires knowledge of human affairs as a child learns to walk, by falling down and picking itself up.

So not all knowledge is propositional, as the case of the learning infant illustrates: it knows what it knows about walking without hearing any account of it and without being able to give any account of it. But propositions can still prove useful as provisional supports. And one momentous lesson of 1989 is that democracy, for the moment, and the free market, whether linked or apart, look far more practical and durable than dictatorship and a command economy.

That is a surprising discovery, and one never before clear in human affairs. Even the most dedicated partisans of democracy or the free market have seldom dared advance it in our time; and on a long view, the pioneers of free institutions have usually been more cautious than bold. The first Constitution of the United States, though elective, was not democratic; nor, for that matter, were the first fitful

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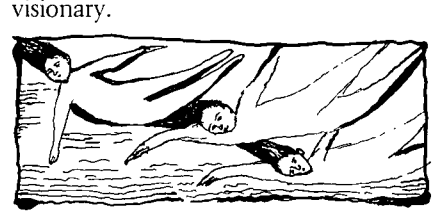
attempts at constitutions by the French after 1789, and in any case those attempts quickly collapsed. Burke, too, who died in 1797, was nothing of a democrat; and the British system, like the American, evolved only cautiously in that direction, and by stages, between the 1830's and the 1880's. There are no sudden leaps to total liberty: none, at least, that survive. The law of gradualism here seems well-grounded on instances. Indian democracy, which is the largest on earth, was founded in 1947 on a succession of parliamentary enactments that began in the late 19th century, advancing step by step through the 1920's and 1930's, and its success celebrates the Whig principle of broadening precedent, not the claims of violent revolution.

So the durability of democracy is above all surprising because events of our own century have not prepared us for it. The First World War ruined four empires—the German, the Austro-Hungarian, the Russian, and the Turkish—but the democratic hopes that succeeded them had no lasting life, and the Second World War saw the spread of dictatorship across Eastern and Central Europe that, by the 1950's, had achieved every appearance of permanency. No wonder democracy was seen by our grandparents as idealistic and fragile. Liberals in that age profoundly underestimated the power of their own ideas, it is now clear, under what looked like the irresistible march of events. The one-party states that arose in Afro-Asia soon after, and in Cuba, imitated the seeming success of the October Revolution, and single-party rule based on a command economy was widely supposed to be the way the world was irreversibly moving, for better or worse. Democracy in those days looked no more than the sad remnant of a Victorian dream; so did free trade and free enterprise. Like a cornered animal, it survived in parts of Western Europe, in Australia, and in North America, but even to its loyalists it seemed at best noble, fragile, and endangered. "We cannot afford a multiparty state" was the confident word from many emerging nations, and there was talk of harnessing the energies of all the people by total effort and making a Great Leap Forward.

With 1989 all that has changed. It was the one-party state that collapsed, its military strength eroded by its ruined economies; and now it is multiparty democracy that looks rich, practical, and tough. Democratic Germany, which has the most advanced free economy in Western Europe, is swallowing what once called itself the German Democratic Republic with less effort than a boa constrictor would take to swallow a lamb; Mengistu's Marxist dictatorship in Ethiopia, faced with total collapse through poverty and civil war, has disavowed socialism; and Castro's Cuba, as Soviet aid runs out, is trying to save its skin by building luxury hotels for Western tourists. All highly astonishing to those who remember the day when Stalin, like Hitler before him, conquered democratic neighbors with an ease that sometimes looked derisory. The age of marching feet has given place to an age of ballot boxes and cash registers, even in Outer Mongolia. Democracy has proved practical: it is dictatorship, as many can now see, that in terms of modern economics is unworkable and visionary.



All this is the triumph of an idea. "When we realized that we were slaves," said Adam Michnik, the Polish dissident, in a remark quoted with approval by Dahrendorf, "we knew that we had become citizens." Some slaves, of course, never realize what they are, and die as slaves. So 1989 illustrates Burke's conviction that liberty is above all a tradition and a sense of tradition—a memory of liberty, perhaps prehistoric, that cannot be erased. Burke spoke of "the great primaeval contract of eternal society," and in that momentous phrase he may have given the hint of an answer to the great question of the day: can one, in the end, have free institutions without a free market, a free market without free institutions? Is freedom divisible, as between economics and politics?

The rulers of China, at least, seem to think not. After the massacre in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, when the ruling party rejected the Gorbachev way and reasserted its hold by force, the shift towards a competitive economy was halted too, as if the connection between the two, real or imaginary, was seen as strong enough to be dangerous; and since then contracts to private entrepreneurs have been issued only sparingly as the old elite in Beijing has tightened its political grip. That may be blind instinct rather than reflection, but the instinct may be sound. Competition means winners; the winners are likely to constitute a moneyed class; and such a class can have dangerously independent views on how the state is to be run and, what is more, the funds and the leisure to advance them. History shows few instances of a revolutionary proletariat, whatever Marx may have hoped; but revolutionary bourgeoisies are rather common, and they have a way of succeeding. All that is far from tight, as an argument, but the Chinese government may still be right to hesitate. Presumably it knows that economic growth is sacrificed when it halts competition. But at least, for a time, it hopes to save itself.

Burke's speculative remark about the great primeval contract of eternal society bypasses two familiar objections to the Whig idea of constitutional liberty. One is that, as an Anglo-Saxon idea, it arrogantly forbids civic rights to all but a few societies, namely those that have already begun to enjoy them. The other is that it leaves the rest of the world with a Catch-22. If you cannot achieve liberty without a tradition of the Anglo-Saxon sort, it may be objected, then how do you begin? That problem is not hypothetical, as many in the African states and in Latin America know. Burke's bold answer is that liberty belongs to humanity as a species, at least from the birth of settled societies—the great primeval contract by which anarchy was exchanged for order—and that there is a human as well as a national tradition of the free.

That, in its controversial way, makes of the human past the urgent business of the new age. There is work here for historians, beyond a doubt; but Burke sought to widen the consciousness of past events far beyond what historians do. The past, he believed, was indispensably commemorated not only in books but in the rites and ceremonies of legislatures, presidents, and constitu-

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tional bodies, and it exists in ritual actions as well as in chronicles. The point is ingenious and persuasive. Coronations and inaugurations, in that view, are a species of historiography, and to watch them is to be reminded of a national past as surely as to read the history of a nation. In that case the dignity of institutions is an essential attribute of freedom; and in his first major pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770), he charged George III and his supporters, as a young member of Parliament, with a concerted attempt to degrade the dignity of Parliament by seeking to efface its traditional ceremonies. Members, he complained, were "to be hardened into an insensibility to pride as well as to duty," and forced by stages to abandon "those high and haughty sentiments which are the great support of independence." It is unusual to hear a moralist speak up for high and haughty sentiments — pride is commonly supposed to be a sin — and Burke, when he wrote that, had been a member of the Commons for less than five years. But if it is the business of tyrants to erase the past, as he believed, then it is equally the business of free men to cherish and restore it. So they have a public duty as well as a right to stand on ancestral dignities and insist on what he calls "points of honour." The modern instances would have interested him. Bolsheviks, like Jacobins, have tried to defame history and to blacken all ages before their own. It is established tyrants, then, and not radicals, who hate the past, and have good reason to distrust tradition.

The point, which is central to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as much as to Burke, is still not universally accepted, and there are still those who see a reverence for tradition as a conservative attribute and contempt as natural to the radical. They are mistaken. A recent political broadside, for example — *Conservatism* (1990) by Ted Honderich, a professor of philosophy at London University — has reviled Burke in familiar terms; and in a defiant letter to the *London Times* (July 26, 1990), the author has returned the attack, calling him "the exemplar of the tradition of Conservatism" and "a partisan of a party of self-interest lacking a moral rationale." Burke, as it happens, never called himself a Conservative or a Tory, and never was one; and since he ardently supported the English Revolution of 1688 and believed in prudent concessions to the American colonists in the 1770's, it is hard even to see him as consistently anti-revolutionary. But he worshiped ceremonial and tradition, and the association of tradition with conservatives, of conservatives with tradition, is by now so automatic in Western political thought that it can mislead even a professor of philosophy.

So the East may have something to teach the West, and the light that comes from the East may illumine a great truth. For in Warsaw, Budapest, and Prague, tradition is not seen as conservative.

In fact, it has just made a revolution, or rather a series of revolutions; and as civil society is rediscovered in lands laid waste by decades of socialist inertia, it is the past that looks subversive and exciting, and socialism, for decades, that has proved the supremely conservative force in Eastern Europe. It has promoted and defended the interests of a ruling caste, it has suppressed deviation and pornography, it has distrusted as decadent any modern spirit in the arts, built architectural facsimiles of ancient monuments, and banned the criticism of a free press. Its conservative credentials are unimpeachable. Now that it is dead, the past suddenly looks potent, and the end of Marxism is not the end of history but a new beginning. The secret toast of Orwell's hero in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was not "To the future" but "To the past," since, to anyone of radical sentiment, "the past is more important." It is by interpreting and reinterpreting the past that present and future are radically reshaped; by a sense of the past that change looks possible, practical, and desirable. That is the opportunity of the age. There will now be a brief pause in which historians, and above all historians east of what was once an armed fortification of tyranny known as the Iron Curtain, ponder what to do with the freedom that is suddenly theirs.

George Watson, who is a fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, is the author of Writing a Thesis *(Longman),* The Idea of Liberalism *(St. Martin's), and* British Literature Since 1945 *(also St. Martin's).*

LETTERS

Jeanne Berg

Poetry and Madness

by Richard Moore

Some months ago a psychiatrist in control of a well-funded foundation, who was, as he supposed, investigating the subject, wrote me, soliciting my opinions about the relationship between "creativity" and "mental illness." I felt nettled and helpless. I avoid using such terms whenever possible. Like most writers, I suspect, when I compose a poem, a story, or an essay, I think of myself, insofar as I think of myself at all, as an imitator, a renderer of actions, a juxtaposer of images, thoughts, and tones, a relater of ideas. All such items to be dealt with — actions, images, etc. — I take to exist independently of me, since I seem more provisional and less interesting than they. What, then, am I creating?

But doesn't the artist, one might ask, create the imitations, the juxtapositions, the relationships? Don't the ideas, the organization of the materials, come from him and him only? I hope not. If I create them, what interest would they have? What general applicability? Would it please a scientist to think that Newton *created* the law of gravitational attraction? No, the artist had best say every prayer to every unknown force and perform every ritual in the hope that he or she will create nothing, only find for all who are interested what is there to find. He must not create, but discover.

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As for the other term—physical illness I understand. A person is sick: he can't do the things he usually can and wants to do. But sometimes one person may say to another in response to an observation that causes discomfort, "You're sick!" It's a put-down, a way not to reply, an overused and uninteresting metaphor. Are "crazy" or—if the psychiatrist prefers—"severely disturbed" people incapacitated and therefore "ill" in the primary meaning of the word? Don't they frequently say things that are very interesting—haunting even? Isn't that what a literary artist strives to do? So how can we describe them as ill, since, in this respect at least, they are highly capable? The term "mental illness" is a metaphor and like all metaphors limited in its application. When it is pushed beyond its limits, it breaks down, becomes meaningless.

Moved by such doubts, one has to go on and ask whether the terms "creativity" and "mental illness" haven't often been used to defend rigid societies now and in recent centuries from too much oddity, too much artistic questioning, too much fun. If we can think that Shakespeare only *created* Othello and Iago, we may "appreciate them properly," which is to say, we may safely ignore them, may safely experience the play untroubled by the naive and scary notion that Othello and Iago are *discoveries*, there to be found in all of us. And if someone (like the "Savage" in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*) takes Shakespeare too seriously in this way, too naively, we may say such a person is mad and safely ignore *him*.

But what about the simple, crude little question implied by the psychiatrist's lofty jargon: is art made by mad people? Plato, for one, seems to have thought so—remarking in *Ion*: "as the Corybantian revelers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains: but when falling under the power of music and metre they are inspired and possessed." That view of poetry frequently becomes the basis for banishing it from society—good middle-class responsible managerial society—altogether: as Plato himself did from his ideal republic.

But Plato's views in this, or at least his motives for them, are suspect for two charmingly opposed reasons: he himself was a failed poet (as a young man he showed Socrates the tragedy he had written, and Socrates told him to forget it) and, at the same time, he was a great poet, a poet-turned-critic whose criticism has the power and imagination of poetry. Or are those dialogues too full of yes-men to be truly dramatic?

It is a historical oddity that when a culture becomes secular, rationalistic, and anti-poetic, poetry itself in the early stages of the new dispensation comes to be looked upon as Plato does with perhaps a touch of mockery in *Ion*: as a divine emanation, irrational, and beyond ordinary life. In compensation for losing his social (Miltonic/Aeschylean) function as an interpreter of the divine, the poet looks upon *himself* as divine while the rest of society regards him as, at best, a bit addled. Didn't something like this happen again in our own European 19th century? If Plato was impressed and amused by the poets who reminded him of Corybantian revelers, what would he have said about Blake, who claimed divine powers, and about the outcast, expatriate Shelley, who announced that poets were the unacknowledged legislators of mankind?

Plato, then, was a Romanticist, and the cultural soil in which Romanticism germinates would seem to be, paradoxically, the unabashed materialism of an emergent middle class. And what is modern psychiatry, after all, but a secular priesthood that deals with the still pesky, if atrophied, spiritual needs of that middle class?

But after Plato comes Aristotle. His *Poetics*, in the casual form in which the treatise has come down to us, may well be merely the lecture notes of a student. It seems clear, nevertheless, that this most seminal of all essays in literary theory is primarily a counterstatement to the Platonic view. For our purpose (which is to give the proper answer to the psychiatrist's question) the relevant passages are XVII, 2:

> Again, the poet should work out his play, to the best of his power, with appropriate gestures; for those who feel emotion are most convincing through natural sympathy with the characters they represent; and one who is agitated storms, one who is angry rages, with the most life-like reality. Hence poetry implies either a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness. In one case a man can take the mould of any character; in the other, he is lifted out of his proper self.

And XXIV, 7:

> Homer, admirable in all respects, has the special merit of being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself. The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator. Other poets appear themselves upon the scene throughout, and imitate but little and rarely. Homer, after a few prefatory words, at once brings in a man, or woman, or other personage; none of them wanting in characteristic qualities, but each with a character of his own.

From these passages it would appear that what, in Aristotle's view, distinguishes a good poet and storyteller is not madness necessarily, but, alternatively and preferably, a form of sanity, "a happy gift of nature." True, he might seem a little odd to someone secretly watching him "work out his play, to the best of his power, with appropriate gestures." But if oddness is madness (as it is sometimes taken to be by psychiatrists, among others), then we live in a mad society. The poet, according to Aristotle—that is, the imitative poet, the kind who describes actions, which is the kind of poet that both he and Plato are talking about—does not directly express himself (or herself) at all. For Aristotle, the poet rationally, lucidly *loses* himself in the actions that he undertakes to describe and in the people (and "other personages"—gods? spirits?) that he hopes to portray. And the aim of the whole process is to help us all achieve the same recognition, the same identification with the feelings of others that is the foundation of the poet's sanity and ours.

Richard Moore writes from Belmont, Massachusetts.

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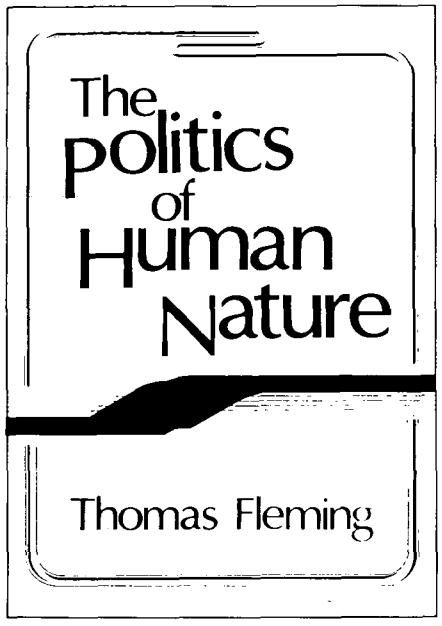

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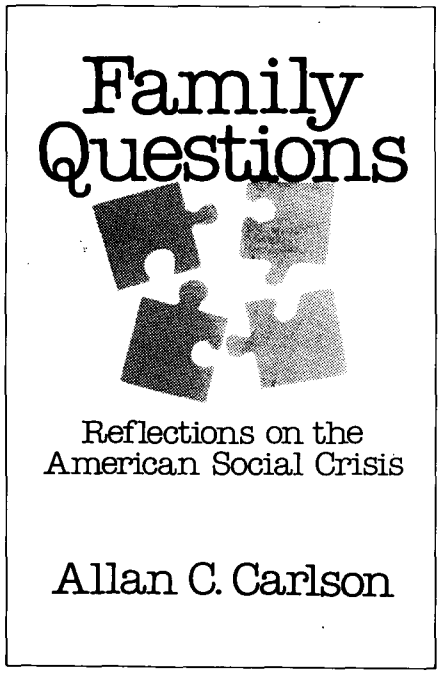

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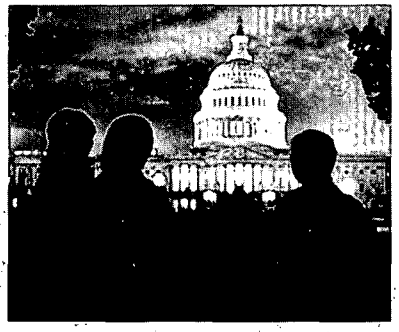

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